

**Texas Adult Education Standards Project
(TAESP)**

Report of the Fall 2006 Statewide Field Test



**Texas Center for the Advancement of
Literacy and Learning**

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Introduction

In Fall 2004, the Texas Adult Education Standards Project (TAESP) staff conducted statewide focus group interviews of adult learners, educators, and administrators. Based on the findings of the interviews, Texas LEARNS decided to replace the Texas Standardized Curriculum Framework (TSCF) with a new set of content standards named Texas Adult Education Standards (TAES). The road to realizing this goal would include the following milestones.

- 1) Adopt five Equipped for the Future (EFF) standards (*Listen Actively, Speak So Others Can Understand, Read with Understanding, Convey Ideas in Writing, and Use Math to Solve Problems and Communicate*)
- 2) Form three writing teams (listening/speaking, reading/writing, and math) to develop the benchmarks for the five adopted standards
- 3) Conduct a controlled field test of the benchmarks
- 4) Revise the benchmarks as a result of the findings of the controlled field test
- 5) Conduct a statewide field test
- 6) Revise the benchmarks as a result of the findings of the statewide field test
- 7) Roll out the finalized standards and benchmarks as TAES

This write-up is a report of the fifth milestone, *Conduct a statewide field test*, that occurred during Fall 2006. TAESP has previously reported on the efforts related to the first four milestones and will report on the last two milestones at a later date.

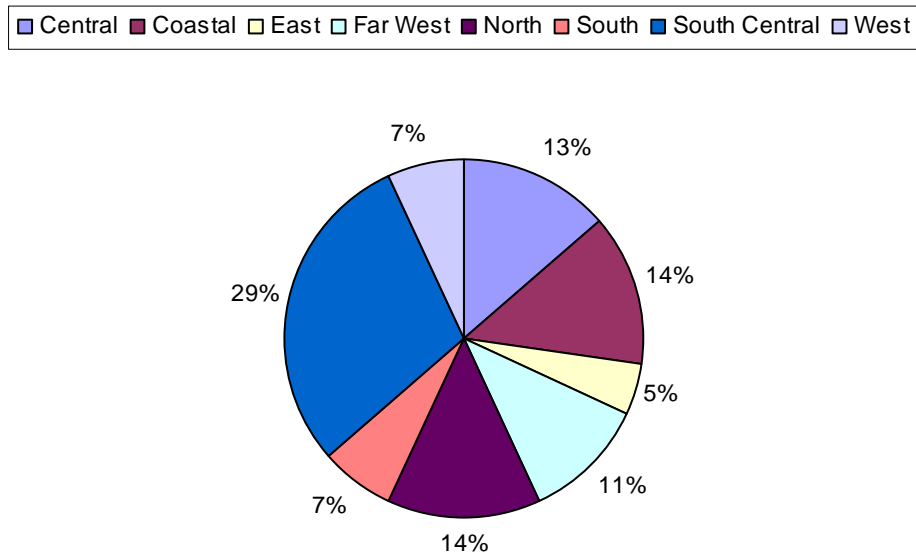
The remainder of this report describes: 1) the methods used to carry out the statewide field test, 2) the findings of the field test, 3) recommended next steps, and 4) recommended future directions.

Methods

During the months of June and July 2006, 55 teachers were selected to participate in the Fall 2006 statewide field test. From this group, 44 teachers actually participated in the field test.

The TAESP staff received 66 applications from individuals interested in participating in the field test. The criteria for participation included: 1) fair representation of all eight GREAT regions, 2) teacher status, and 3) applicant rationale for wanting to become a field test participant. The applications were reviewed by TAESP staff and 55 applicants were selected. Due to lack of participation (e.g. non-participation in mandatory field test training or telephone conference calls) or at participant's request, 11 of these applicants were withdrawn by TAESP staff. Figure 1 displays the representation of the GREAT regions according to the applicants selected for the field test.

Figure 1. The 44 Field Test Participants from the GREAT Regions



Five of the eight regions were selected as training sites to prepare the field test participants on how to teach with standards and benchmarks. These training sessions were held in Austin, El Paso, Houston, Richardson, and San Antonio during the months of July and August 2006.

The statewide field test was implemented in August 2006 and concluded in November 2006. During this period, TAESP staff collected data through conference calls and evaluation forms. Participation in three conference calls with TAESP staff members beginning September 12, 2006 and ending November 16, 2006 was mandatory. During these conference calls, TAESP staff collected data based on the participants' experiences in implementing the standards and benchmarks in their classroom instruction. Open-ended questions addressed how the field test was progressing; difficulties/challenges in implementing the benchmarks; pleasant surprises encountered during the process; suggestions or helpful tips; and additional resources or support needed from TAESP staff during the remainder of the field test. At the conclusion of the field test, the qualitative method of constant comparative was used to analyze the responses to these questions.

In addition to participating in the conference calls, the participants completed an overall evaluation form and one or more level-by-level evaluation forms. A Likert-scale survey was used to rate the clarity, simplicity, adaptability, usefulness, relevancy, effect on student learning, classroom preparation, instruction, and appropriateness to multi-level classes. Quantitative methods were used to analyze the responses from these Likert-scaled questions. The participants were asked open-ended questions relating to their suggestions for changes to the standards and benchmarks, overall reactions to using the standards and benchmarks, and

suggestions for professional development in utilizing the standards and benchmarks. Thematic coding (a qualitative method) was used to analyze the responses to these open-ended questions.

Demographics

Out of the 44 participants, 20 participants (45%) were ESL teachers; 10 participants (23%) ABE teachers; 13 participants (30%) ASE/GED teachers, and one participant (.02%) did not indicate. Table 1 represents a breakdown of participants according to their positions.

Table 1. Breakdown of Field Test Participants by Participant's Position

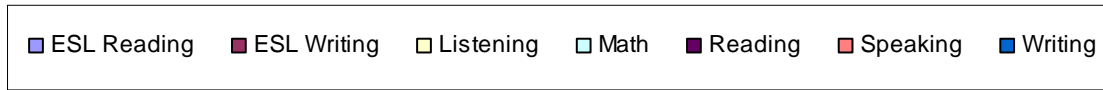
Participant's Position (n=44)			
ASE/GED Teacher	ESL Teacher	ABE Teacher	Others
13	20	10	1

The standards and benchmarks were field tested as follows:

- ESL Reading (7 participants);
- ESL Writing (5 participants);
- ESL Listening (5 participants);
- ESL Speaking (8 participants);
- Math (8 participants);
- Reading (5 participants);
- Writing (6 participants).

Figure 2 provides a breakdown of the representation of the standards and benchmarks by field test participation.

Figure 2. Field Test Participants According to the Standards and Benchmarks



Findings

The findings from the Fall 2006 statewide field test were very similar to the findings from the Spring 2006 controlled field test. However, with 42 of the 44 teachers new to the concepts of benchmarks and standards-based teaching, we were able to gather much useful data – both quantitative and qualitative.

The Quantitative Data

1. Level-by-level Forms

A Likert-scale, 4 being the highest and 1 being the lowest, was used to rank the 11 questions dealing with clarity, simplicity, adaptability, usefulness, relevancy, effect on student learning, classroom preparation, instruction, and appropriateness to multi-level classes. The participants answered these questions for every level of the standard they field-tested.

An average of three participants field-tested each of the levels. With such a small sample, we were only able to generate some descriptive statistics from the data. The most important was the overall average calculated from the Likert-scale responses of each of the standards. The standards and their averages on a 4-point scale, with 4 being the highest, are described below in high-to-low order.

- Math - 3.54.
- Reading – 3.33
- ESL Writing – 3.10
- ESL Reading – 3.10
- ESL Speaking – 2.92

- Writing – 2.91
- ESL Listening – 2.81

The writing teams used this information to help them address which of the standards they would revise first when they met at the February 7-9, 2007 workshop. The averages from all of the Likert-scale responses can be found in Appendix A.

2. Overall Forms

A Likert-scale, 4 being the highest and 1 being the lowest, was used to rank the 16 questions dealing with clarity, simplicity, adaptability, usefulness, relevancy, effect on student learning, classroom preparation, instruction, and appropriateness to multi-level classes. The participants answered these questions for the one standard they field-tested.

Like the level-by-level forms, we were only able to generate some descriptive statistics from the data since the sample was small. The most important was the Likert-scale average of each of the standards. The standards and their averages on a 4-point scale, 4 being the highest, are described below in high-to-low order.

- Math – 3.36
- ESL Reading – 3.26
- ESL Speaking – 3.20
- Reading – 3.15
- ESL Writing – 2.88
- Writing – 2.81
- ESL Listening – 2.52

The writing teams used this information to help them address which of the standards they would revise first when they met at the February 7-9, 2007 workshop. The averages to all of the questions can be found in Appendix B.

The Qualitative Data

This section is broken into two parts. The first part covers the qualitative findings from the Fall 2006 field test. In the second part of this section, we compare the qualitative findings of the Spring and Fall 2006 field tests.

Fall 2006 Field Fest

The data for the Fall 2006 field test was gathered from three conference calls, the open-ended responses from the level-by-level forms, and the open-ended responses from the overall forms.

For an individual break down of the findings by data set, please refer to Appendix C for the qualitative findings from all three conference calls, refer to Appendix D for the qualitative findings from the level-by-level forms, and Appendix E for the overall evaluation of the qualitative findings.

The findings in this section are grouped into six different categories:

- 1) the overall experience of teaching with benchmarks;
- 2) the benefits and problems of using benchmarks;
- 3) strategies used to teach the benchmarks;
- 4) ideas for professional development;
- 5) implementation issues; and
- 6) suggestions.

1) The Overall Experience of Teaching with Benchmarks

The overall experiences of the participants during this field test were both positive and negative. The participants had a positive experience because they became better teachers, there was an increase in student satisfaction, and the benchmarks provided organization. The participants had a negative experience because they felt the benchmarks were confusing and difficult, they felt frustrated and rushed, and that using the benchmarks was time consuming.

2) The Benefits and Problems of Using Benchmarks

The participants identified several benefits with using the benchmarks in their teaching. The benchmarks:

- were a good guide for instruction,
- allowed for creativity within the classroom,
- incorporated real world experiences into the classroom, and
- served to provide a clear path (where to go next with the class, how to get the class to the next level, and how to go back and practice).

The examples in the benchmarks were very beneficial to the participants.

However, the participants identified several problems with using the benchmarks in their teaching.

- The benchmarks were vague and ambiguous.
- The participants did not know if the benchmarks were written for the students or for the teachers.
- There needed to be more terms defined within the benchmarks.
- There needed to be more examples within the benchmarks.
- The participants found the lesson plan template very difficult to fill out. They were unsure how to complete it and they did not know why they were completing the lesson plans.

Overall, many of the participants were unsure of the levels used by the benchmarks because the benchmarks levels did not correspond with their program or BEST/TABE levels. Many of the participants were unfamiliar with the National Reporting System (NRS) Educational Functioning Levels (EFLs).

3) Strategies Used to Teach the Benchmarks

There were many strategies used by the participants during the course of the field test.

- When teaching the standards and benchmarks, the participants focused on 2-3 benchmarks in each lesson regardless of the lesson length (some lessons could take over a week to complete).
- They mixed higher and lower level students in their multi-level classes.
- They involved learners in what was being taught.
- They based the lessons they taught from real-life experiences.
- They aimed for flexibility.

The strategy used most often by the participants for completing the lesson plan template was to look at the benchmarks first and then develop the lesson plan.

Resources that the participants used included the examples within the benchmarks. In fact, the participants referred to the examples more than the benchmarks themselves. Also, if a participant was in the same program as a Standards Specialist, they consulted with the specialist frequently.

4) Ideas for Professional Development

The participants had several ideas for professional development.

- More guidance with how to teach using the NRS levels instead of their program or TABE/BEST levels;
- Wanted to learn from and share successful methods of implementing the benchmarks in the classroom;
- To have access to a bank of lesson plans aligned with the standards and benchmarks;
- To have testimonials from teachers who have used the benchmarks; and
- To have group interaction with other teachers who were using the benchmarks.

The participants also requested that the standards and benchmarks have clearer objectives and terms and requested help with aligning the benchmarks to lesson plans, developing lesson plans, and assessing student learning.

5) Implementation Issues

There were several implementation issues that arose during the field test. They are described below in high-to-low order of how often the issues arose.

#1: Expectations of Teachers

The most mentioned issue pertained to the expectations of the teachers using the benchmarks. The participants reported that the teachers are key to the students' understanding of the benchmarks; that the teachers will need to understand the

standards, benchmarks, and levels; the teachers will need to be able to teach a multi-level class; and the teachers will need to be familiar with subject-matter concepts they are teaching.

#2: Expectations Teachers Place on Students

The second most mentioned issue was the expectations the teachers place on the students. These expectations included the teachers will need to explain the benchmarks to the students; the students will need more detailed instruction than given by the benchmarks; the students will not be interested in the benchmarks' level of detail; and the teachers will need to help the students move away from broad goals (e.g., getting a GED) to more narrow goals (e.g., writing a thank you note).

#3: Lesson Plans and Benchmarks

The third most mentioned issue dealt with the lesson plans and the benchmarks. The participants were confused with how the lesson plans and the benchmarks fit together. They also did not know how much time would be used to teach a lesson (e.g., 1 hour, 1 week, or 1 month). The participants mentioned again how a bank of lesson plans aligned to the standards and benchmarks would have been a great benefit during the field test.

#4: Record Learning

The fourth most mentioned issue was how to record learning. The participants were unable to use any measurable assessments because none is aligned to the benchmarks. They also did not know how to capture evidence of the students' learning. The participants again mentioned that they were confused by the usage of the NRS levels in the benchmarks.

6) Suggestions

The participants mentioned several suggestions for the benchmarks, assessment, implementation, and resources.

Benchmarks

Benchmark suggestions included:

- Provide more examples of the benchmarks.
- Provide strand names for the benchmarks need and write the benchmarks in layperson's language.
- Place one strand of benchmarks per page.
- Put examples in with the benchmarks (not on a separate page).
- Write the benchmarks so the students can understand them (as mentioned earlier, the participants were unclear as to whom the benchmarks intended audience was).

Assessment

The participants suggested that there needs to be assessments aligned to the benchmarks and there needs to be a greater emphasis on the NRS level descriptors.

Implementation

The participants suggested that for implementation, teachers should share their experiences field-testing the benchmarks.

Resources

The suggested resources included the following.

- A bank of lesson plans.
- One glossary instead of two.
- Mouse-overs for the online standards.
- Expertise on teaching using standards and benchmarks through Standards Specialists who reside in the same city.
- Hubs for communication such as conference calls and listservs.

Comparison between the Two Field Tests

As mentioned earlier, the findings from the Fall 2006 statewide field test were very similar to the findings from the Spring 2006 controlled field test. However, there were some significant differences and can be grouped into six different categories:

- 1) the benefits of using benchmarks;
- 2) the problems of using benchmarks;
- 3) strategies used to teach the benchmarks;
- 4) ideas for professional development;
- 5) implementation issues; and
- 6) suggestions.

1) The Benefits of Using Benchmarks

All of the benefits mentioned in the Spring 2006 controlled field test were also mentioned in the Fall 2006 statewide field test. In addition, the following benefits were mentioned during the Fall 2006 statewide field test.

- The benchmarks helped to find students' proficiency and helped to determine student progress.
- The benchmarks allowed for creativity in the classroom.
- The lessons created using the benchmarks incorporated real-life experiences.

2) The Problems of Using Benchmarks

One problem reported during the Spring 2006 controlled field test was a lack of clear-cut assessments when teaching using the benchmarks. The problem mentioned in the Fall 2006 statewide field test was lack of knowledge about the NRS levels.

3) Strategies Used to Teach the Benchmarks

Strategies for teaching the benchmarks mentioned during the Spring 2006 field test, but not the Fall 2006 field test, included the following.

- Review and cover the lower levels first.

- Focus on 2-3 benchmarks per class meeting.
- Look at the benchmarks before, during and after teaching.
- Create checklists.
- Develop a lesson plan then look at the benchmarks.
- Recommend certain books as references.

Strategies for teaching the benchmarks mentioned during the Fall 2006 field test, but not the Spring 2006 field test, included the following.

- Focus on 2-3 benchmarks per lesson.
- Mix higher and lower level learners in a multilevel class.
- Be flexible in the classroom.
- Involve students in the lesson planning.
- Base the lessons on real-life experiences.
- Look at the benchmarks then develop a lesson plan.

4) Ideas for Professional Development

Ideas for professional development mentioned during the Spring 2006 field test, but not the Fall 2006 field test, included the following.

- Acknowledge different teaching styles.
- Train on how to use test results to assess students' needs.
- Have teachers work in small groups during training sessions.
- Develop an implementation guide.
- Discuss the assessment-learning cycle/teaching-learning cycle and adult learning theories and needs.

Ideas for professional development mentioned during the Fall 2006 field test, but not the Spring 2006 field test, included the following.

- Teach using the NRS levels.
- Provide access to a bank of lesson plans aligned to the standards and benchmarks.
- Generate group interaction such as conference calls.
- Provide guidance on how to develop a lesson plan and how to assess learning.

5) Implementation Issues

During the Spring 2006 controlled field test, the participants had very broad questions dealing with implementing the standards and benchmarks. These questions dealt with accountability, assessment, available resources, required documentation, and statewide implementation. During the Fall 2006 field test, the participants mentioned implementation issues in greater detail.

6) Suggestions

Both the Spring and Fall 2006 field test participants gave suggestions for the benchmarks and their format, alignment/assessment, implementation, and resources.

Benchmarks

Benchmark suggestions mentioned during the Spring 2006 field test, but not the Fall 2006 field test, included that the benchmarks be cross-referenced with similar benchmarks, be cohesive throughout all of the standards, and have examples in them. In Fall 2006, the participants mentioned that the benchmarks needed more examples and strand names.

The Spring 2006 field test suggested changes to the format of the benchmarks included having the benchmarks' layout be landscape, not portrait, having the same format for all the standards, having a color-coded system, and be small and not too large and cumbersome. In Fall 2006, the participants mentioned there should one strand per page and the examples should be located with the benchmarks.

Alignment/Assessment

Alignment/assessment suggestions mentioned during the Spring 2006 field test, but not the Fall 2006 field test, included tying the benchmarks to textbooks and aligning the benchmarks with the TABE/BEST. In Fall 2006, the participants mentioned that they needed NRS level descriptors.

Implementation

Suggestions for implementation mentioned during the Spring 2006 field test, but not the Fall 2006 field test, included sharing the field test experiences with the second field testers and having the state office (Texas LEARNS) provide a consistent, clear message about standards implementation. In Fall 2006, the participants mentioned sharing their experiences with other teachers interested in implementing the standards and benchmarks.

Resources

The resources suggested by the Spring 2006 field test, but not the Fall 2006 field test, included learning activities, a checklist, complete appendix, implementation guide, and a website where questions could be sent and answered. The resources suggested by the Fall 2006 participants include having a bank of lesson plans, having one glossary, having mouse-overs in the online standards, and having access to the Standards Specialists.

Next Steps

The following are the recommended next steps.

- Complete the process of finalizing the benchmarks by addressing and incorporating the suggestions from the field test into the implementation process (e.g., have all strands on one page, writing team members have interspersed examples throughout all benchmarks, etc.).
- Standardize the 120 lessons developed by writing team members and field test participants, as well as 200 lesson plans collected from teachers throughout the United States to create an online bank of available lessons for teachers to draw standards-based lessons from.
- Incorporate changes into the Worksheet *11-Steps for Developing a Standards Based Lesson Plan*, which was piloted at TALAE, February 22, 2007.
- Use the writing team members' input to identify where the current standards and benchmarks dovetail with the workforce readiness credential work.
- Carry out the Texas Adult Education Standards Project Kickoff Conference during June 24-26, 2007:
 - Theme: Texas...Reaching New Standards
 - Purpose: Unveiling of the standards and benchmarks materials, including the proficient performance posters, CD-ROMS containing the 7 Texas Adult Education Standards and Benchmarks, and the standards-based lesson bank of 300 plus lessons for teachers
 - Location: Austin, Texas
 - National Speakers:
 - Dr. Ben Bissell, "Managing Change and Transition"
 - Tom Britton, "The Magic of Change"
 - Targeted Audience: Adult Educators, Administrators, Practitioners, Literacy Council Volunteers, GREAT Centers, Credential Project Staff, Texas LEARNS leadership staff
 - Anticipated Participants: 500

Future Directions

We recommend the following considerations be taken regarding the adoption of potential future standards:

- Recommend for a group of workforce professionals to consider adopting EFF standards that address many of the "soft skills" (interpersonal skills) necessary for the workplace (e.g., Resolve Conflict and Negotiate, Cooperate with Others).
- Recommend for another group to look into the possibility of adopting the EFF Standard "Use Information and Communications Technology."

Appendix A

Fall 2006 Field Test Evaluations: Quantitative Analysis of the Responses to the Likert-scale Questions in the Level-by-Level Forms

Fall 2006 Field Test Evaluations: Quantitative Analysis of the Responses to the Likert-scale Questions in the Level-by-Level Forms

The field test participants responded to the following Likert-scaled questions.

- Q1 = Question 1: Are these benchmarks specific enough to be helpful in developing lesson plans and instruction?
- Q2 = Question 2: Do the benchmarks provide sufficient contextual information and a strong sense of what learners are expected to do at this level?
- Q3 = Question 3: Do the benchmarks include sufficient information to develop assessments for classroom use?
- Q4 = Question 4: Do the benchmarks reflect learning that can be observed or verifiable in a definable way?
- Q5 = Question 5: Do the benchmarks include realistic scope and quantity for the level, given the time constraints?
- Q6 = Question 6: Are the benchmarks applicable to what you normally teach?
- Q7 = Question 7: Do the resources you are currently using (including teaching material) support the benchmarks?
- Q8 = Question 8: Do the benchmarks use language that is sensitive to all adult learner populations and is free of bias?
- Q9 = Question 9: Are these benchmarks free of educational jargon?
- Q10 = Question 10: Are these benchmarks clear enough for *adult learners* to understand?
- Q11 = Question 11: Are these benchmarks clear enough for *instructors* to understand?

Quantitative Data for the Math Team

Standard	Average Ratings of the Levels Evaluated						
Math	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	Average
Q1	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.67	3.40	3.50	3.51
Q2	3.50	3.00	3.50	3.83	3.80	4.00	3.61
Q3	3.50	3.00	3.50	3.67	3.60	4.00	3.54
Q4	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.67	3.60	4.00	3.71
Q5	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.40	4.00	3.57
Q6	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.60	3.50	3.77
Q7	3.50	3.50	3.75	3.83	3.80	4.00	3.73
Q8	3.00	3.50	3.75	3.50	3.40	4.00	3.53
Q9	3.00	2.50	3.25	3.50	3.60	4.00	3.31
Q10	3.00	2.50	3.00	3.17	3.00	3.50	3.03
Q11	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.60	4.00	3.60
Average	3.45	3.27	3.52	3.58	3.53	3.86	3.54

Standard	Number of Teachers Rating Each Level					
Math	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6
	2	2	4	6	5	2

Quantitative Data for the Reading/Writing Team

Standard	Average Ratings of the Levels Evaluated						
Writing	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	Average
Q1	3.33	3.33	3.17	3.14	2.75	3.00	3.12
Q2	3.33	3.67	3.17	3.14	3.00	3.50	3.30
Q3	3.00	3.33	3.17	2.71	2.75	2.50	2.91
Q4	3.00	3.67	3.33	2.71	3.00	3.00	3.12
Q5	3.67	3.00	3.33	2.71	2.50	2.50	2.95
Q6	3.67	3.67	3.33	3.00	2.25	1.50	2.90
Q7	3.67	3.67	3.50	2.86	2.75	2.50	3.16
Q8	4.00	3.00	3.33	3.14	3.00	3.00	3.25
Q9	2.67	2.00	3.00	2.43	2.00	2.50	2.43
Q10	2.33	2.00	2.50	2.43	1.75	2.00	2.17
Q11	3.00	2.67	3.17	3.00	2.00	2.50	2.72
Average	3.24	3.09	3.18	2.84	2.52	2.59	2.91

Standard	Number of Teachers Rating Each Level					
Writing	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6
	3	3	6	7	4	2

Standard	Average Ratings of the Levels Evaluated						
Reading	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	Average
Q1	2.50	4.00	3.67	3.75	3.00	3.25	3.36
Q2	3.00	3.00	3.67	3.75	3.25	3.25	3.32
Q3	3.50	4.00	3.67	3.75	3.00	3.25	3.53
Q4	3.50	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.25	3.71
Q5	3.50	4.00	3.67	3.75	3.25	3.50	3.61
Q6	4.00	4.00	3.67	3.75	3.38	3.63	3.74
Q7	3.00	2.00	3.33	3.25	2.88	3.38	2.97
Q8	3.50	4.00	3.67	3.75	3.50	3.75	3.69
Q9	3.00	2.00	3.00	3.25	2.50	2.75	2.75
Q10	2.50	2.00	2.33	2.75	2.38	2.63	2.43
Q11	3.50	4.00	3.33	3.75	3.38	3.38	3.56
Average	3.23	3.36	3.45	3.59	3.09	3.27	3.33

Standard	Number of Teachers Rating Each Level					
Reading	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6
	2	1	3	4	4	4

Quantitative Data for the Speaking/Listening Team

Standard Average Ratings of the Levels Evaluated

Listening	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	Average
Q1	3.00	2.50	2.67	3.00	3.00		2.83
Q2	3.00	2.75	2.33	3.00	3.00		2.82
Q3	3.00	2.50	2.67	3.00	2.50		2.73
Q4	3.00	2.75	2.67	3.00	3.00		2.88
Q5	3.00	2.75	2.67	2.50	3.00		2.78
Q6	2.50	2.75	3.00	3.00	3.00		2.85
Q7	2.00	2.50	2.00	1.50	1.50		1.90
Q8	3.50	3.50	4.00	4.00	4.00		3.80
Q9	3.50	3.25	3.67	3.50	3.00		3.38
Q10	2.50	2.50	1.67	1.50	2.00		2.03
Q11	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.50		2.90
Average	2.91	2.80	2.76	2.82	2.77		2.81

Standard Average Ratings of the Levels Evaluated

ESL

Reading	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	Average
Q1	3.00	3.00	3.50	3.50	3.00	3.00	3.17
Q2	3.00	3.50	3.50	3.00	3.00	2.50	3.08
Q3	3.00	3.50	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.08
Q4	2.50	3.00	3.50	3.25	4.00	3.50	3.29
Q5	2.67	3.00	3.00	2.75	3.00	3.00	2.90
Q6	2.67	3.00	3.50	3.50	4.00	3.50	3.36
Q7	2.67	3.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	2.50	3.03
Q8	2.67	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.00	3.50	3.28
Q9	3.00	3.50	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.50	3.00
Q10	2.67	3.50	2.50	2.50	2.00	1.50	2.44
Q11	3.33	3.50	3.50	3.25	4.00	3.00	3.43
Average	2.83	3.27	3.23	3.11	3.27	2.86	3.10

Quantitative Data for the Speaking/Listening Team

Standard Average Ratings of the Levels Evaluated

Speaking	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	Average
Q1	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.25
Q2	3.75	4.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.96
Q3	3.00	3.25	2.50	2.33	1.00	1.00	2.18
Q4	3.25	3.50	2.00	2.33	1.00	1.00	2.18
Q5	3.25	3.50	3.00	3.33	3.00	3.00	3.18
Q6	3.25	3.75	4.00	3.33	4.00	4.00	3.72
Q7	3.50	3.00	4.00	3.33	4.00	4.00	3.64
Q8	3.75	3.50	3.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.88
Q9	3.00	3.00	3.50	2.67	3.00	3.00	3.03
Q10	3.25	3.50	2.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	2.13
Q11	3.50	3.75	3.50	3.33	2.00	2.00	3.01
Average	3.36	3.48	3.09	2.88	2.36	2.36	2.92

Standard Number of Teachers Rating Each Level

Listening	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6
	2	4	3	2	2	0

Standard Number of Teachers Rating Each Level

Speaking	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6
	4	4	2	3	1	1

Standard Average Ratings of the Levels Evaluated

ESL Writing	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	Average
Q1	3.00	3.50	3.33	3.50	3.50	3.00	3.31
Q2	3.00	3.00	2.67	2.50	2.50	3.50	2.86
Q3	3.00	3.00	2.67	2.50	2.50	3.50	2.86
Q4	3.50	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.50	3.33
Q5	3.00	3.50	3.33	3.00	3.00	2.50	3.06
Q6	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.83
Q7	3.50	3.50	3.67	3.50	3.50	2.50	3.36
Q8	3.50	4.00	3.67	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.61
Q9	2.50	3.00	2.67	2.50	2.50	3.00	2.69
Q10	2.00	2.50	2.33	2.00	2.00	2.50	2.22
Q11	3.50	3.50	2.67	2.50	2.50	3.00	2.94
Average	3.14	3.41	3.09	2.95	2.95	3.05	3.10

Standard Number of Teachers Rating Each Level

ESL Reading	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6
	3	2	2	4	1	2

Standard Number of Teachers Rating Each Level

ESL Writing	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6
	2	2	3	2	2	2

Appendix B

Fall 2006 Field Test Evaluations: Overall Quantitative Analysis

Fall 2006 Field Test Evaluations: Overall Quantitative Analysis
Score (4=extremely, 1=not at all)

Questions	Overall Mean	ESL Reading	ESL Writing	Listening	Math	Reading	Speaking	Writing
To what degree were these benchmarks clear and easy to understand?	3.16	3.43	2.8	2.83	3.43	3.4	3.43	2.67
To what degree were the benchmarks free of jargon?	2.98	3.14	2.8	3	3.43	2.8	3.14	2.33
To what degree were the benchmarks easy to use?	3.12	3.29	2.8	2.5	3.5	3.4	3.43	2.83
To what degree did the benchmarks reflect the essential knowledge and skills stated in the corresponding standard?	3.4	3.43	3	2.5	3.86	3.8	3.86	3.17
To what degree were the benchmarks adaptable to diverse learning situations?	3.26	3.29	3.2	2.6	3.57	3.4	3.29	3.33
To what degree were the benchmarks specific enough to be useful in developing and guiding instruction?	3.07	3.43	2.6	2.33	3.57	3.4	3.14	2.83
To what degree did the benchmarks correspond to your students' current levels of functioning?	3.19	3.14	3.2	2.83	3.71	3.4	3	3
To what degree did the benchmarks "stretch" your students?	2.98	3.29	2.8	2.2	3.14	3.2	3.14	2.8
To what degree were the benchmarks manageable in your classroom?	3.23	3.14	3.2	2.67	3.71	3.4	3.57	2.83
To what degree did using the benchmarks	2.26	2.57	2.4	2	1.86	2.6	2.29	2.17

Fall 2006 Field Test Evaluations: Overall Quantitative Analysis
Score (4=extremely, 1=not at all)

Questions	Overall Mean	ESL Reading	ESL Writing	Listening	Math	Reading	Speaking	Writing
change the way you taught?								
To what degree did using the benchmarks assist you in preparing and teaching your classes?	2.88	3.29	2.8	2.3	3.14	2.8	2.86	2.86
To what degree will the benchmarks assist NEW teachers in preparing and teaching their classes?	3.2	3.43	2.6	2.4	3.86	3	3.57	3
To what degree will the benchmarks assist instructors in preparing and teaching multi-level classes?	3	3.29	3	2.3	3.43	3	2.71	3.2
To what degree did standards implementation make a difference in learner performance?	2.84	3.14	3.2	2.33	2.86	2.6	3	2.67
To what degree did the benchmarks follow a progression of knowledge and skills from level to level with increasing difficulty?	3.23	3.29	3.33	3	3.43	3.4	3.29	2.83
To what degree were the benchmarks' layout and format user-friendly?	2.95	3.57	2.4	2.5	3.29	2.8	3.43	2.4
COMPOSITE	3.05	3.26	2.88	2.52	3.36	3.15	3.20	2.81

Appendix C

Fall 2006 Conference Calls 1, 2, and 3 Qualitative Findings

Fall 2006 Conference Calls 1, 2, and 3

Qualitative Findings

How is the field test coming along?

Not all of the respondents directly answered this question, so this section is broken up into two parts – the direct responses to this question and other types of responses to this question.

Direct responses

1st conference call

The majority of the participants (10) responded that the field test was coming along **positively**.

It's going great. (Field-tested Speaking)

It's going pretty well. (Field-tested Reading)

Only 1 participant reported **negative** feelings:

It's coming. It's a challenge, it's hard. (Field-tested Writing)

There were 8 participants that had not started the field test yet and were unable to answer this question.

2nd conference call

The majority of the participants (26) responded that the field test was coming along **positively**.

Everything is groovy, I'm getting the hang of things. (Field-tested Math)

Doing pretty well. We did introductions and this went pretty well. (Field-tested Listening)

Only 2 participants reported **negative** feelings:

I am having a difficult time implementing the lessons because I have a large multilevel transient class ... It's been very hectic. (Field-tested Writing)

It's not doing too good. My project isn't doing too well. My students totally freaked out. I'm going to have to regress and put in some easier stuff. (Field-tested Writing)

One participant's class was no longer meeting, so she had completed all of the requirements of the field test, but was still participating in the conference calls.

3rd conference call

The majority of the participants (23) responded that the field test was coming along **positively**.

Everything is going well for us. I have seen retention in the classroom.
(Field-tested Reading)

Very well. I am so much more secure and confident about using the standards and benchmarks. (Field-tested Writing)

Only 2 participants reported **negative** feelings:

Slowly, but I am doing it. (Field-tested ESL Reading)

I am struggling because 90% of the students are bridging from ESL into ABE.
(Field-tested Writing)

Three participants were no longer field testing due to the end of their program, and four participants were in the last few days of their program.

Other responses

Throughout all three conference calls, the participants also discussed the benchmarks (both positive and negative aspects), the lesson template, the lessons they had taught, and how their students were responding. Comments from all three conference calls were combined, then analyzed.

The majority of comments were about the benchmarks. Most of the participants had positive things to say about them. They reported that the benchmarks allowed for creativity in the classroom, the examples within the benchmarks were useful, it served as a guide to instruction, and the benchmarks' levels were accurate and achievable for the students. The 3 participants reported the negative aspects which were: the benchmarks were too general, time consuming, and leveling was off.

It's hard to stay in one column of level across the different strands. (Field-tested Writing)

The benchmarks alone, they were too general. (Field-tested Speaking)

The participants also discussed the lesson template and said that it was a helpful tool and that it helped with instruction and becoming familiar with the benchmarks. The participants discussed a variety of lessons that they had taught apply the benchmarks – such as emergency services, financial planning, and building a catapult. They said that they and the students liked how the real-life approach these lessons took compared with traditional textbook lessons.

The participants reported that their students were more enthusiastic and confident and that they were feeling accomplished. One respondent stated “as far as the working or applications of the benchmarks, they are showing the increase that I thought might

show. Right now I'm TABING ... about half the students have taken the test, and I've noticed an increase in their math scores" Math field test participant.

Have you had any pleasant surprises during the course of the field test?

Changes in the students

Participants reported that their students were more engaged in the lessons, more enthusiastic about being in class, had increased confidence, and had applied lessons from class to the *real world*.

Yes, the fact that they are engaging it to the information or fact they have in front of them has increased, as opposed to when I used to give them worksheets or canned stuff. Having real life practical applications—it keeps their engagement level very high. (Field-tested Math)

Again, the enthusiasm of the students for the kind of materials they are working on. I've followed some of the suggestions that go with the benchmarks. The students feel like what we are doing is something they can use. (Field-tested ESL Writing)

My students are eager to learn. When I talk about using something from life helps them to become more independent. Now they are able to make better choices. They have more control in their lives. They are moving from dependency to independence. (Field-tested Reading)

I have one student who came across a police officer, she ran a red light. When the officer approached her, she told him she doesn't speak English well but was learning and asked "what is the problem, officer?" The officer was happy for her that she was learning English and let her off. (Field-tested Speaking)

A change in teaching

The participants reported that they felt like better teachers and were getting their students involved with the lessons.

Pacing was an issue. I found that the more precise I was, the better my pacing was. I feel I have become a better teacher. (Field-tested ESL Reading)

I am very surprised at how well the students are taking ownership of the project. Especially my ESL students, it is helping with their confidence. It also opens up dialog that we wouldn't have had before. (Field-tested ESL Reading)

Benchmarks a good guide

The third surprise was the participants mentioned that the benchmarks were a good teaching guide and using the benchmarks had increased their retention rates.

I love that I have this guide. I love the format of what comes later and what comes before. These standards help me to know what to do with information

now that I have it. It provides me with a clear guide. It is incredibly valuable. (Field-tested Writing)

No, really want to push if the benchmarks are used when dealing with gaps in retention. Benchmarks help with retention because they know what is expected when they come back. The focus on specific areas and it seems to stick with the students better. (Field-tested Math)

There were a few participants in each conference call that mentioned they had not encountered any surprises during the field test. Conference call 1: 7 participants; Conference call 2: 6 participants; and Conference call 3: 7 participants.

Have you had any difficulties or obstacles during the course of the field test?

Benchmarks

The most difficult thing that participants reported was about the benchmarks specifically. They reported that the benchmarks were too general, too wordy, time consuming, needed more examples, did not match the levels of the students, and were hard for students and teachers to understand.

The standards, they were a little too general for me. I like a more direct guidance. When I was working on the lesson, it was a little vague. (Field-tested Reading)

I really think it more complicated than it needs to be. The levels are awfully wordy. I understand why they are doing that, but using planning and planning strategies are all you need to say. Almost making it more difficult than it needs to be. (Field-tested Writing)

“This is new to me. Getting to a working knowledge takes time so that I can go to a level or benchmark. I need more hands on. (Field-tested Writing)

The old way [TSCF] was a little more detailed but this new way doesn't have as many examples. (Field-tested ESL Writing)

You have to be careful about leveling because you have to use previous experience to determine their level. (Field-tested Math)

It was difficult for students to comprehend the standards and benchmarks. Teachers may also interpret them differently. (Field-tested Reading)

Lesson template

The second most difficult thing was the lesson template. The participants found the template to be confusing, time consuming, and needing some refinement.

The lesson plan form is a little outrageous. It is a little repetitious and not in teacher language. (Field-tested Math)

If you ask teachers to prepare standards-based lessons, they will shy away from teaching from standards because it will take too much time to develop the lessons. (Field-tested Math)

Wording on the green sheet is giving me problems. Like I might say, “Didn’t I answer that on another question?” (Field-tested Reading)

Program’s open enrollment policy

The third most difficult thing was dealing with the program. The major difficulty with the program was the program’s open enrollment policy – their students were leaving.

Applying the benchmark has been okay. I work at a homeless shelter, and there is a constant influx of new students. We have an open-entry/open-exit program and it has been hard to implement the standards. (Field-tested Writing)

Teaching with standards and benchmarks

The fourth most difficult thing was teaching the standards and benchmarks. The participants reported that it was hard to teach the standards and benchmarks in a multilevel class, get the students to narrow their goals, and teaching with the benchmarks was time consuming.

I’m having a difficult time implementing the lessons because I have a large multilevel transient class. The size of the class is about 20-30 students. It’s been very hectic. (Field-tested Writing)

I am having a problem with getting the conversation started. Taking the students from generalized to specific goal. Hard to structure because their answers are so broad. (Field-tested Listening)

It took time to match up benchmarks to activities in books. (Field-tested Listening)

There were a few participants in each conference call that mentioned they had not encountered any difficulties during the field test. Conference call 1: 5 participants; Conference call 2: 15 participants; Conference call 3: 10 participants

Is there anything that we (the TAESP staff) can help you with during the course of the field test?

No help needed

The majority of the field test participants reported that they did not need any help from the TAESP staff during the field test.

Lesson plan template

They also requested help with the lesson template. They thought that professional development would be critical for the lesson templates success.

There needs to be workshops on lesson plan building. (Field-tested writing)

Are there any helpful hints or suggestions that you have for implementing the standards and benchmarks?

Change teaching style: Be flexible, involve students, mix levels into different groups

The most helpful hints the participants had in regards to the field test dealt with how they teach the standards and benchmarks. They felt that when teaching the standards and benchmarks, it was best to be flexible, to get the students involved in the lessons, and mix the students in different levels up.

Try to adapt. It's important to include the whole class rather than individual. I use strands instead of individual benchmarks. A willingness to be flexible makes it easier on you. (Field-tested Reading)

This process involves the students more. I am really listening to the students. It helps them and gets them more involved. You seem more empathetic. (Field-tested Reading)

Don't be afraid to mix lower level students with the intermediates and higher, especially if the activity is real life related because the lower level students tend to pick up the higher level content. (Field-tested Math)

Base lessons on real-life experiences

The other hint participants reported was that they made sure their lesson were based on real-life experiences.

Just keep it real life. I have a hard time thinking of how to make lesson plans for the student based on real-life situations. It has broadened my thinking. I am trying to open my mind to more real-life math instead of to the GED test. I try to work hard on the real-life applications. (Field-tested Math)

There were a few participants in each conference call that mentioned they had no hints that they could provide us. Conference call 1: 7 participants; Conference call 2: 7 participants; Conference call 3: 9 participants

Overall, how did the field test go?

Field test - Positive experience

This question was only asked during the last conference call. Overall the participants thought the field test was a positive experience.

It wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. I was pleasantly surprised. It was a little confusing at first. (Field-tested Math)

The last 12 weeks have gone really well. I explained what the students were going to do with the reading standard and the students were a little

intimidated, but then they got really excited and became a bit competitive with each other. They are eager to get to the next level. (Field-tested Reading)

Field test – Thorough

They mentioned that the field test itself had been very thorough and that the staff was present.

I felt it was quite thorough. I appreciate that this is not being rushed. There are a handful of teachers who have been able to speak frankly and not hurt anyone's feelings. I see a good future for this. (Field-tested Math)

I have really enjoyed it. It has been an interesting learning experience... Everything else was easy to deal with and TAESP staff was there to help. (Field-tested Math)

Became better teachers

The participants mentioned that as teachers they had become better teachers.

The process is great. I was pretty overwhelmed at the beginning. But it allowed me to step into my students' shoes. Eating the elephant one bite at a time. It's helped me to become a better teacher. (Field-tested Math)

Appendix D

Fall 2006 Level-by-Level Forms Qualitative Findings for Open-ended Questions

Fall 2006 Level-by-Level Forms

Qualitative Findings for Open-ended Questions

What changes would make these benchmarks clearer to instructors?

ESL Reading

Suggested changes:

- Add more examples
- Add “self-develop material” to glossary
- Add grammar into benchmarks
- Address how to incorporate technology into benchmarks
- Make the benchmarks a little more challenging

Implementation issues

- Lesson bank needed

Professional development:

- Emphasize that the lesson plan template is to help with teaching the standards and benchmarks

No changes needed: 5/21 codes (24%)

ESL Writing

Suggested changes:

- Follow the format in 4.4 which includes the words “such as” and an explanation of the how to achieve the benchmark.
- Make examples in 3.1 and 3.3 part of the benchmark and not examples
- Make 2.1 more specific also include examples to this benchmark
- Add more examples
- Benchmark 5: more specific examples
- Fine tune examples
- Separation between “editing” and “revising” confusing
- Benchmarks are very general

Implementation issues:

- Lesson bank needed

No changes needed: 7/19 codes (37%)

Speaking:

Suggested changes:

- Benchmarks wording difficult to understand - Reword the benchmarks into layman’s terms so they can be easily reviewed and implemented

Implementation issues:

- Measurable assessments to determine completion points

Professional development:

- Explain how benchmarks can apply to any standard at any level
- Broader explanation of EFF standards
- Instructors learn about benchmarks and how to write a lesson plan

Format:

- Have just one strand on one page

No changes needed: 9/21 codes (43%)

Listening:

Suggested changes:

- Define “listen actively”
- Strand .1 - label strand for .1 as “understand and respond to oral information”
- Level 4 - example “compare and contrast” should be moved to level 4
- Strand .5 - more specific examples for the .5’s
- Fine tune examples
- Create strand names

Format:

- Keep benchmark and examples on same page

No changes needed: 1/20 codes (5%)

Math

Suggested Changes:

- 4.2 - may want to add 4.2a Define mathematical symbols and change 4.2 to 4.2b
- 5.12 – may want to add 5.12c Define order of operations and change 5.12a to 5.12b and 5.12b to 5.12c
- 6.12 – may want to add 6.12d Define linear equations and change 6.12a to 5.12a and 6.12b to 6.12c and 6.12c to 6.12d
- 5.2a – write out the words for the symbols
- Place learning activities in with benchmarks
- Clarify some terms: Some instructors with limited math knowledge may not understand “recognize and use equivalencies” or “determine simple probabilities” or “construct patterns using geometric sequences”

Implementation:

- Assumption of the benchmarks: instructors should know how to teach math using the standards

Professional development:

- Benchmarks clear for experienced instructors, but newer instructors will need clarification

No changes needed: 11/30 codes (37%)

Reading

Suggested Changes:

- Make benchmarks easier to follow and understand
- Be more specific in wording so instructors can distinguish between levels
- 6.5 - Be more specific on 6.5 – not sure how would evaluate whether a learner has achieved this level due to vagueness “wide range of strategies” and “variety of texts”
- Be more specific: what is “continuous text” or “medium length text”

No changes needed: 7/18 codes (39%)

Writing

Suggested Changes

- 6.5 – need to clarify or explain the active voice and parallel structures
- 6.4 – define writing task
- 2.4 – define “level of detail”
- 2.4 – either elaborate on or offer details to help the instructor to be able to better assess the learner
- 2.3 - unclear about “words with personal significance”
- Need to elaborate on defining punctuation and types of spelling errors
- 4.2 – need to elaborate with more examples of “multiple strategies” than just a graphic organizer or eliminate the word in “use multiple planning strategies”
- 6.3 – clarify terminology including “cultural references”
- Levels 5 and 6 - Demonstrate through examples the differences between level 5 and 6
- 5.4, 5.5 - Do not see distinction between 5.4 and 5.5
- 5.4 – unclear on “adjust text to effectively address the intended audience”
- 4.5 – possible clarify the level of instructor guidance
- What are the differences between revising and editing? They mean the same thing to me.
- Level 3 - Use and command of grammar has very little detail and this is a major objective of ABE. The only place there is any specifics on grammar skills is in the “Revise writing” strand, and the one listed seem to be unrealistic for level 3.
- Use words that are familiar. Words used were not clear and as they progressed they became increasingly difficult to comprehend.

- “Follow a highly structured, externally developed plan or text model to organize information into simple structures” is too wordy. It makes an instructor pause to decipher what is expected at this benchmark
- Levels 1 and 2 - The first two levels were too complicated
- More examples in the strands
- Perhaps include writing samples to distinguish between different levels

Format:

- Consider not using a table format – current format is unreadable

Professional development:

- Standards levels do not match test levels – there needs to be clarity in planning lesson to fit levels.
- There are many advanced grammar skills some instructors may not be familiar with as this is a higher level than the learners generally work in

No changes needed: 3/37 codes (8%)

What changes would make these benchmarks clearer to adult learners?

ESL Reading

Suggested changes:

- More examples
- Level 4 – more realistic of what learners can do at this level , they still need to be a little bit more challenged

Teaching strategies:

- Instructors discussed benchmarks with class – learner needed minimal support

Program issues:

- More bilingual materials

No changes: 6/16 codes (38%)

ESL Writing

Suggested changes:

- Need a bilingual approach to teaching standards – language and concepts of benchmarks need to be translated
- Learners need more detailed instruction than benchmarks provide
- More examples needed
- 2.1 – needs to be more specific, would like some more examples in that benchmark. Mimic 2.2 (written with a bullet following the benchmark)
- 3.1 and 3.3 – examples be bullets of the actual benchmarks instead of examples.

Implementation issues:

- Learners need more detailed instruction than benchmarks provide

Teaching strategies

- Instructors discussed the benchmarks with class – ESL learners did not understand
- Learners were not able to use standards as a guide to improve their writing

No changes: 2/16 codes (13%)

Listening:

Implementation issues:

- The benchmarks are vague and more detailed benchmarks would be required to get the learners to buy into the process.
- Instructor should have no trouble delivering benchmarks because examples are there
- Its up to the instructor to present the benchmarks in a way the learners will understand

- I don't know how to make the benchmarks clear to the learners who speak different languages from the instructor.
- Learners are interested in participating in setting education goals, but not interested in this level of detail.
- Develop a lesson plan using the Learning Cycle Guiding questions, the learner will provide the language that should be used to make the benchmarks clear to them

No changes: 4/17 codes (24%)

Speaking

Suggested Changes:

- 2.2 – “basic grammar conversations in structured communication” examples given “use simple present and present progressive tenses and using plurals.” It was difficult to meet this benchmark with most of the level 2 learners.

Implementation issues:

- Depends on how well the instructor incorporates the benchmarks into the lesson plan.
- Depends on how the instructor presents the lesson.
- Learners need some explaining regardless of level.
- Instructor needs to provide a clear understanding to the learners of the direction that the benchmarks are attempting to take in terms of improving adult education.
- Instructors need to use benchmarks as a guideline to make lesson plans,
- Learners were intimidated by benchmarks – they wanted the main point of each benchmark. Instructor explained that benchmarks are a tool and the learners had nothing to worry about.
- After experiencing the first lesson plan and trying to explain the strands and benchmarks to the learners, I decided not to mention it anymore since it caused a lot of anxiety.

Format:

- Write the benchmarks in large font so elderly can see them

No changes: 8/18 codes (44%)

Math

Suggested changes:

- Clearer language and examples
- Add examples into the benchmarks
- More specific examples and pictures to show each benchmark along with words – for example a picture of a coordinate grid with points plotted; a written equation $-x + 3 = 8$
- Add strand names
- More visuals incorporated into benchmarks

- 2.3 – learners do not understand “natural numbers”
- 2.4 – learners do not understand “model and apply”
- Level 5 – change “model” to “solve”

No change 8/23 codes (35%)

Reading

Suggested changes:

- Eliminate education jargon/big words such as “adjusting predictions”, “specialized content area vocabulary”, “derive”, “notate”, “decode”, “high-interest related vocabulary”, “idiomatic expressions”, “decoding”, “manipulate”, “associate”, “oral vocabulary”, “familiarity”, “specialized vocabulary”, “context cues”, “word relationship”, “multiple scenarios”, “synthesizing”, “acronyms”, “sight words”, “text structure”, “minimal guidance”, and “indices”.
- 6.2 - Clearer examples

Implementation issues:

- Brief explanation of benchmarks by instructor should help learner comprehend
- I think learners would find them clear dependent upon their level. Instructor is key to making sure goal was clear.
- Perhaps more simplified language may be used by instructor when explaining the objectives of the lesson components.

No changes: 0/26 codes (0%)

Writing

Suggested changes:

- I don’t think the average learner in my class told to “use simple planning strategies to identify and organize ideas to support a single purpose to produce a legible and comprehensible draft” would have a clue where to begin. The language is way over their heads and the sentence structure is too complex.
- Use words that are more familiar
- Eliminate grammar descriptors
- Provide learners with a writing sample
- 2.3, 3.3, 4.3, 5.3, 6.3 – all sound too much alike. If learners were to identify a writing goal and then were told to look at the rubric and determine which of the benchmarks they would use to help do that writing assignment, they would have a hard time deciding which one to use.

Implementation issues:

- Instructor must be familiar with grammar concept terminology
- There are still concepts at the level that will need to be explained to learners.

- Learners were able to understand at the very broad concepts, but were not able to use standards as a guide to improve writing. I think these standards are written primarily for instructors.

Format:

- Limit wording – make bullets that can serve as checklist
- Needs to be written as bullets with less wording
- Consider a format that does not include table column method.

No changes: 5/27 codes (19%)

What is your overall or general reaction to the benchmarks you reviewed?

ESL Reading

Suggested changes:

- Too simplistic
- Need more examples
- Benchmarks lack grammar and technology inclusion
- More challenging benchmarks – the reading materials should be more challenging and complex

Implementation issues:

- Hard to create and develop a plan with the learners to capture evidence and report learning.

Positive experience: 15/25 codes (60%)

ESL Writing

Suggested changes:

- Benchmarks are difficult to understand and differentiate without the examples.

Positive experience: 11/16 codes (69%)

Listening

Implementation issue:

- Using benchmarks requires a different mind-set from the traditional approach to ESL lesson planning.
- Benchmarks clear – just a matter of applying them to a given lesson
- Benchmarks can't be used in isolation from the other benchmarks

Positive experience: 13/24 codes (54%)

Speaking

Suggested changes:

- Tweak the lesson plan template to fit a multi-level classroom
- Add more examples
- Benchmarks are not specific enough

Implementation issue:

- May have difficulties having experienced instructors use the benchmarks – buy-in
- EFF standards helpful if everyone is on the same page

Teaching strategy:

- Selected appropriate benchmarks to use from a level instead of using an entire level

Positive experience 14/22 codes (64%)

Math

Implementation issues:

- These are methods that every experienced instructor should be utilizing.

Positive experience: 30/31 codes (97%)

Reading

Suggested changes:

- 5.2, 5.3 – hard to know exactly what is meant by these benchmarks, more examples needed

Positive experience: 41/43 codes (95%)

Writing

Suggested changes:

- 4.4, 4.5 – don't see the difference between "making a few simple content changes" and "making a few simple edits"
- Level 6 - has clearer definitions than level 5
- 4.3 – eliminate "coherent steps" wording because it is defined by the following statement "well-constructed and linked paragraphs"
- 4.5 – need more explanation of the terminology "progressive present real conditional, habitual past" Does this really fit in a level 4 learner?
- 1.1 – could be condensed to state "free writing without regard to audience"
- 5.4 – define 'writing task'
- Level 2 – the editing skills seem a bit optimistic. Does it mean that learners at this level have command of all of those grammar skills?
- Graphic organizer – think the use is late, find them very useful in levels 1 and 2
- Examples not helpful
- Lack of differences between levels
- Benchmarks too vague
- Why is one strand called revising and another strand called editing?
- Level 6 - Higher level writing is not usually taught, most learners will rarely reach level 6 writing

Implementation issues:

- Initially negative response to benchmarks with reluctance and fear of losing freedom – but found this was not the case.
- With time found the benchmarks to be helpful
- 1.2, 1.3- there is a drastic jump between "creating lists of simple responses" to "knowing the alphabet and numbers" (field test participant perhaps did not understand format)

Positive experience: 16/40 codes (40%)

What do you think is missing from the benchmarks you reviewed?

ESL Reading

What's missing:

- Technology and grammar
- The bi-lingual approach
- More challenging benchmarks
- Prior knowledge to construct new knowledge

Implementation issues:

- Standards based education is for life beyond the classroom

Nothing missing: 2/14 codes (14%)

ESL Writing

What's missing:

- Liked the old checklist where I was able to clearly see when I had taught a specific skill
- Without examples, I wouldn't be so sure that my lesson addressed the benchmarks
- Glossary of grammatical terms and other instructional terms

Suggested changes:

- More examples
- 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 – not easy to interpret, liked 4.4 and 4.5 suggestions on what to do to accomplish this benchmark.

Nothing missing: 4/18 codes (22%)

Listening

What's missing:

- Clearer definition of the purpose and applicability
- The reason/purpose for using benchmarks

Suggested changes:

- Add strand names
- Is “integrate information with prior knowledge to address purpose” understated?
- 3.4 – states that learners should be able to use simple re-phrasing. This is something that may be more realistic for level 4.
- Level 3 – level needs to be re-written. My learners should be able to ask for repetition or express that they don't understand.
- Level 4 – level needs to be re-written. My learners should be able to ask for repetition or express that they don't understand, rephrase, ask for elaboration and clarification.

Implementation issues:

- Instructors need to understand benchmarks well enough to be able to explain them in terms the learners can understand.
- It took a while to understand how to use the lesson plan template.

Nothing missing: 2/20 codes (10%)

Speaking

What's missing:

- Clear, concise, listed objectives
- Suggested list of textbooks and support materials

Suggested changes:

- More examples
- Add a new strand dealing with body language and gestures
- Levels 3 and 4 - there seems to be a large gap between levels 3 and 4 – there almost needs to be another level in between.

Nothing missing: 9/18 codes (50%)

Writing

What's missing:

- More developmental detail on grammar and word usage – ABE learners need to do a lot more than simply “pay attention to conventions of English language”
- The instructors level of guidance during the writing process

Suggested changes:

- 6.2 – define “tools”
- More examples, especially in level 4
- Incorporate using technology for writing research-like papers
- Have actual writing examples
- Some sort of introduction to why we write in the first place – a discussion on the different types of writing and lay out the different purposes for writing (narrative, informative, instructive, persuasive)
- There is little included about the conventions of writing that are important to learning basic English such as capitalization, punctuation, spelling, contractions, possessive nouns
- In the organize information strand: structure decreases as the level increases – why?
- 2.5 – some of the editing needs to include the level of guidance the instructor should provide
- Include common types of formats used such as letter writing, resume writing, etc.

Nothing missing: 12/29 codes (41%)

Math

What's missing:

- Some benchmarks say “to solve word problems” and others don’t. I am wondering if more of them should state “solve word problems”. If not, why then do some of them address word problems?
- 5.17, 5.18, 6.17 – seems to be missing. It is listed on the sample of learning activities, but not in the benchmarks.

Suggested changes:

- More words for symbols used in math
- Fractions seems to be disjointed across strands
- Levels 5 and 6 – rounding and estimating could be incorporated at these levels.
- 2.1b – “...to the millionth and the millions” (what does that mean?)

Nothing missing: 10/22 codes (45%)

Reading

What's missing:

- Clear examples for individuals to be able to see the progression of higher skills and know when one has achieved the goals for a particular level.

Suggested changes:

- 6.2 – some of the words such as “terms, signs, and symbols” are unclear
- 6.3 – what is meant by “vocabulary organizer” or “complex document” Some clarification and examples would be helpful.
- Need more examples
- 2.3, 3.3b, 4.2, 4.3, 5.2, 5.3 – could use some more examples

Nothing missing: 10/26 codes (38%)

What benchmarks definitely need work? Why?

ESL Reading

Suggested changes:

- All of the benchmarks need work – they are out of date with modern ESL practice.
- All of them – they are too simplistic
- 5.4 - needs to start introducing more reading/comprehension strategies. Learners need to be better prepared for the advanced level

No work needed: 6/13 codes (46%)

ESL Writing

Suggested changes:

- 2.5 – use clarification of “word wall”
- 5.2 – would be helpful to have examples of planning strategies. What is considered a “highly legible and comprehensible draft”?
- 5.3 – what is a “basic text structure”?
- More examples needed
- Add a glossary
- Give simplified examples (model sentences) to accompany terms in the glossary
- 1.1, 1.2 – really need to be more specific, had to use the examples to figure out what benchmarks meant
- What is the difference between editing and revising?
- 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 – need more examples
- 3.1, 3.3, 3.4 – need bullets with specific information included
- 2.1 not specific enough
- 2.4 – verb tense and parts of speech need to be in a bullet not an example

Format:

- Put each level on its own page

No work needed: 1/20 codes (5%)

Listening

Suggested changes:

- What does “use basic knowledge of some cultural conventions to understand oral communication” mean and how does an instructor incorporate it into a lesson and assess it?
- Benchmarks are not clearly stated by the standard – need clarity in how listening standard is broken into benchmarks
- More examples
- 1.2 – recognize and respond to a few high frequency grammar conventions used in speech. Example: some high frequency wh- questions

- 1.3 – should read “distinguish between basic formal and informal speech. Hello/Hi.” I think the other examples are too high level and do not distinguish between formal and informal speech.
- 3.1 – should be worded in a way that can be more easily understood. I don’t know what “increasingly complex words and phrases” are. I had to look at 2.1 and 4.1 as reference points to figure it out.
- 4.5 – one of examples says that the learners should be able to follow debates. I feel this example should be in level 5 or 6.

No work needed: 3/12 codes (25%)

Speaking

Suggested changes:

- Strands – 1.2-6.2 which dealt with grammar. Identifying the differentiating factors was cumbersome, I did not know if I was reading too much into the benchmark or not. 3.2 sounds like a level one benchmark rather than three. When I taught level one, my learners started a lesson with a structured, rehearsed dialogue that transformed into authentic communication by the end of the lesson. The other strand was the strand on monitoring communication
- Strands – 1.3-6.3 which dealt with monitoring communication. I had problems specifically with the last three benchmarks. I thought the objectives and/or phrasing was redundant: “rephrase”, “clarify”, “give feedback” and “check/adjust pacing”. Perhaps 3.3 could change “give feedback” to mean “repeat message word-for-word for understanding and not changing pronouns” ex. “you” for “me”; 4.3 “rephrase” to signify change pronouns for reported speech, use tag or negative questions to check for understanding; 5.3 “rephrase/clarify” to “ask grammatically correct information questions for understanding”; 6.3 ability to provide analogies and compare/contrast.
- 2.4 – “produce basic sounds ... modeled with limited control of rhythm, stress, and intonation.” This benchmark needs examples which would help clarify it
- Level 1 – needs more consideration. I find it difficult to start at square one without overwhelming the individual with too much information and not allowing enough time for assimilation.
- Level 1 – we don’t have many learners who are completely illiterate, even in their own language

Implementation issues:

- Less experienced instructors may need more clarification

No work needed: 7/17 codes (41%)

Math

Suggested changes:

- 4.14 – what is meant by “geometric sequences”? This can be different depending on people’s backgrounds.

- 4.7a – “area of rectangular shapes”. There are no other shapes like a rectangle – may use quadrilaterals with pictures?
- 5.2a – write words to go with the symbols
- Fractions – disorganized in the way it is presented in the matrix
- Levels 5 and 6 – rounding and estimating do not have benchmarks, of course learners functioning at these levels should be proficient with rounding and estimation – maybe that is why these benchmarks are not included in these levels.
- Be careful with wording – what are “natural numbers” and “model and apply”?
- 1.5, 2.5, 3.5 – the strand on currency could be easily combined with other strands
- Add a 4.2a to add clarity
- Add a 5.12c to add clarity
- Add a 6.12d to add clarity

No work needed: 11/23 codes (48%)

Reading

Suggested changes:

- 2.3 – what is “everyday vocabulary”?
- 1.3, 1.4 – hard to translate into a learning activity – still not completely sure if understand 1.3 at all.
- 5.2, 5.3 – need more ideas and examples
- Add examples for each of the benchmarks
- 6.2 – needs examples

No work needed: 10/21 codes (48%)

Writing:

Suggested changes:

- 5.3 – needs to be written clearer and more concise
- 1.2 to 6.2 – don’t understand progression from level 1 to 6. Why is a gradual minimization of the amount of structure associated with an increasing level of ability or performance expectation? Aren’t complex letters, reports, etc. highly structured?
- What is the difference between revising and editing?
- Level 3 – “coherence and progression of ideas” would not help a level 3 learner
- 4.5 – eliminate the detailed specifics of verb tenses
- 6.3 – should be explained in an example or a sample work to clarify the difference between level 5 and 6.
- 1.2 – eliminate the terminology “highly structured, externally developed plan or text” and clarify the meaning of 1.2.
- 2.2 – eliminate the terminology “highly structured, externally developed plan”. This phrase is confusing and difficult to determine the meaning.

- Level 5 – these benchmarks seem a little too advanced.
- 5.4 – not sure what “correct shifts in voice or one” is accurate for this level
- 5.5 – there is a large amount of grammar skills for one level

Implementation issues:

- Benchmarks need to be more instructive about the things we expect learners to learn at each level – should the benchmarks indicate how well the learners have mastered the tools of writing?

No work needed: 12/27 codes (44%)

Please add any additional comments and/or questions about the benchmarks.

ESL Reading

Suggested changes:

- Levels 4 and 5 – need to be more challenging
- Add a listing of bilingual materials

Implementation issues:

- Remind learners and instructors that the benchmarks are not an end point, but a good structure for any goals that the learners may have.
- Confusion about how the benchmark levels are determined – NRS levels do not seem to match program/TABE/BEST levels.
- Need lesson plan bank

Professional development:

- There is a need for training how to use the benchmarks

Positive experience: 5/16 codes (31%)

ESL Writing

Suggested changes:

- Add more examples
- 5.2 – even with the example I am not sure how to accomplish it. Look at 6.2, planning strategies are defined. Why isn't this included in 5.2?
- 2.1 – please define “audience”
- 2.2 – please define “limited structured, externally developed plan, text model”
- 5.1 – please define “self-determined purpose”, and “limited instructional support”
- 5.2 – please define “legible”
- 5.3 – please define “convey”
- 5.4 – please define “feedback”, “thesaurus”, “subject/verb agreement”, and “peer review”
- 5.5 – please define “edit”
- 4.2 – please define “externally developed plan”, “legible”, “main idea”, and “supporting details”
- 4.3 – please define “convey”
- 4.4 – please define “feedback”, “peers”, and “peer review”
- 4.5 – please define “graphic organizer”, and “edit”
- 4.5 – please provide a sample of a graphic organizer
- 6.1 – please define “a self-determined purpose;
- 6.2 – please define “outlining”, “graphic organizers”, and “categorizing ideas”
- 6.3 – please define “convey”, “supporting facts”, “supporting details”, “salutations”, “multiple coherent steps”, and “linked paragraphs”
- 6.4 – please define “level of detail”, “coherence of ideas”, “progression of ideas”, “compound sentences”, “complex sentences”, and “self-monitor”

- 6.5 – please define “self-generated text”, and “comprehensive edits”
- 1.1– please define “audience”, and “reproduce”
- 1.2 – please define “highly structured”, “externally developed plan”, “text model”, and “prompts”
- 1.5 – please define “directionality of text”
- 1.5 – Please rewrite the example in 1.5 *Write and punctuate date appropriately--Please clarify with some simple examples whether you wish the date to be written all in numbers (10/05/06 or word/numbers--October 5, 2006). If all numbers are called for, perhaps the example should read (month/day/year).
- 3.2 – please define “minimally structured”, “externally developed plan”, “text model”, and “compound sentences”
- 3.3 – please define “connected text”
- 3.4 – please define “subject-verb agreement” and add some simple examples
- 3.5 - provide an example of a simple editing checklist (or reference to one) would help

Positive experience: 7/17 codes (41%)

Listening

Suggested changes:

- Simplify benchmarks

Positive experience: 2/3 codes (66%)

Speaking

Implementation issues:

- New instructors will need more guidance for using the benchmarks

Positive comment: 2/5 codes (40%)

Math

Suggested changes:

- 1.2, 1.10, 1.14 – could have used more information. Examples would have clarified these.

Implementation issues:

- Are there any directives on assessments and mastery or will it be up to the individual instructor to determine these?
- Make sure to re-evaluate these benchmarks from time to time

Positive experience: 1/8 codes (13%)

Reading

Suggested changes:

- Is there a benchmark 5.6b? I see a 5.6a, but no 5.6b

Format:

- Have each level on a separate piece of paper

Positive experience: 5/9 codes (56%)

Writing

Suggested changes:

- 3.5 – sample of a spelling list
- Graphic organizers – provide examples
- 2.4 – provide writing examples to demonstrate degree of detail
- 2.5 – list of “high frequency words”
- Level 5 – asking a great deal of expertise in grammar and writing skills- not sure level is accurately describing a level 5 learner
- Not enough emphasis on writing or teaching basic English skills
- Observation: learners with less prior knowledge (formal education) did not perform as well

Implementation issues:

- Buy-in might be a problem
- Testimony from other instructors telling their experience with the research might help to alleviate the pressure and resistance that are accompanied with change.

Professional development:

- During training would be helpful to have a sample spelling list referred to in 3.5
- During training provide examples of graphic organizers and how to incorporate them into lessons.
- During training provide writing examples to demonstrate degree of detail as presented in 2.4

Positive experience: 2/18 codes (11%)

Appendix E

Fall 2006 Overall Evaluation Form Qualitative Findings for Open-ended Questions

Fall 2006 Overall Evaluation Form

Qualitative Findings for Open-ended Questions

What changes would makes these benchmarks easier to understand:

Provide examples of how to read, use, and understand the benchmarks.

I find the strands confusing. Purpose, organization, presenting information, revising writing, and editing writing are apparently separate and distinct lessons. At level 5, it gives "writing a thank you note" as an example of "determine purpose," then for "organize information" it gives as an example writing a complaint to a store as to why you are returning an item, and then for "present information" it suggests having students write a recipe or give directions on how to get to a place. I can't tell from these examples what the distinction is between the various strands. The examples would seem to be appropriate for any of the other strands.

Explanations of the benchmarks.

Differentiate benchmarks more precisely. I based my understanding of the criteria limits by the examples; otherwise I would not have known where the cutoff point was.

Format (different layout, maybe use bullets)

The format of the benchmarks makes them hard to see. Maybe if each benchmark were on one page so that readers would not have to flip to continue would help. Also, include examples in the benchmarks to give clearer direction.

Easy to understand

I think they are quite easy to understand. We need to take the opportunity to look at all suggestions and to make changes according to the input from all the field testers. Especially from those who are reviewing these benchmarks. We should pay special attention to those that are new to these standards and benchmarks.

9/44 (20%) respondents made no response or indicated no change needed.

What changes would makes these benchmarks easier to use.

Format (organization of strands, layout, add checklist)

My co-worker and I had to sit down and actually make an outline with specific information for each level before beginning our lesson plans. The old Texas Standards format is much more specific and easier to use.

More examples

Consistency; name the strands; examples should be included in strand; might consider consolidating to fewer benchmarks.

Terminology (not clear)

There also seems to be so many terms to know just to be able to read the chart: what are standards, benchmarks, strands, components?? Perhaps it could be made more simple??

Easy to use

The benchmarks are simple things to follow. The instructor should be informed that having a lesson planned is the best way for the benchmarks to make sense.

9/44 (20%) respondents made no response or indicated no change needed.

What is your overall or general reaction to the standards and benchmarks?

Primary reaction: positive in terms of benchmarks as a guide or tool; satisfaction; contributing to student learning; and opportunity to participate in the project.

Overall, the benchmarks are an excellent guide to instruction. It can offer a great outline of what learners should be expected to know and allow an instructor to use them to guide their lessons. They are not too specific and lend themselves to allow instructors to tailor their lesson to the individual student's needs.

Negative reactions related to being too general; terminology ambiguous; appropriateness of Level 6; and multilevel applicability.

I thought the math was very specific and covered all levels very well. Level 6 is not suitable for most classrooms, but I can see the usefulness if you were teaching a college prep class. I think it would be important, especially for new teachers, to make it clear that level is for more difficult skills beyond GED.

1/44 (2%) respondents made no response.

What kinds of professional development (additional knowledge, skills, and/or resources) do you think would be helpful in utilizing the benchmarks?

Workshops that address: lesson plans; administrators; teachers; explaining the benchmarks; subject specific.

Whenever these standards become mandated, I think it should be required of all adult education administrators to be trained (similar to how the field-testers were trained) on the standards. Then I think it should be required of all administrators to provide training to their teachers; thus, perhaps the understanding, purpose, and use of these standards can be somewhat regulated throughout all adult education centers in Texas. Also, when teachers are given the standards/benchmarks charts, there should be an accompanying document that explains the different parts and terms used in the chart (like "strand," "benchmark," etc). Also, a quick explanation on how to properly read the chart would be helpful.

Lesson plans: lesson plan bank; how to write/create; ESL

A lesson plan bank and an ongoing discussion site where teachers can discuss and share experiences, successes, and problems. I think it would be a good idea to have frequent (once a month) open ended reflective evaluations that would serve two purposes: one, for teachers to reflect on our teaching, and second, for you to have a record on how teachers are using the benchmarks, reactions, and comments. I think that trainings twice a year would help keep us on the right track, especially if we are using all benchmarks.

1/44 (2%) respondents made no response.

Please add any additional comments and/or questions about the benchmarks.

Primarily positive suggestions: usefulness of the benchmarks as a guide and tool for teachers:

I think they are useable and will be very helpful to new teachers to get an idea of what to teach and where to start teaching. For experienced teachers it is a good check to make sure essential skills are being taught.

Negative comments varied: non-applicability to student progress; revise completely; layout and organization:

The benchmarks all need to be rethought entirely. They do not provide clear distinctions between levels. They don't provide enough clear and distinct examples to allow one to see a definite increase in performance expectations from one level to the next. If they are not going to be distinct, then how can they serve as a guideline? The four standards (reading, speaking, listening and writing) are not very well integrated. You can't just ignore grammar in writing and say, "Oh, that's taught under another standard."

Suggestions given to the layout and presentation; need to provide more examples:

Any examples and/or stories of people currently using these standards/benchmarks should be shared through the Far West Project GREAT website or by other means. It would be helpful to those that have not heard or applied the standards and benchmarks.

I know this might be in the works already. I would like to see the benchmarks as a stand alone, separate document. I was constantly struggling with the "big binder" to access the standards I was implementing - a minor detail!! You've done a great job of putting this together.

15/44 (34%) respondents made no response.