



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

# EDUCATION

## OSSE GUIDANCE LETTER (OGL) - ADULT AND FAMILY EDUCATION (OGL-AFE 1 – 2024)

**DATE:** Feb. 29, 2024

**TO:** OSSE Adult and Family Education Sub-grantees

**FROM:** J. Michelle Johnson, State Director, OSSE Adult and Family Education

**RE:** Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment Implementation - Guidance for Test Administration and Instruction

### Background

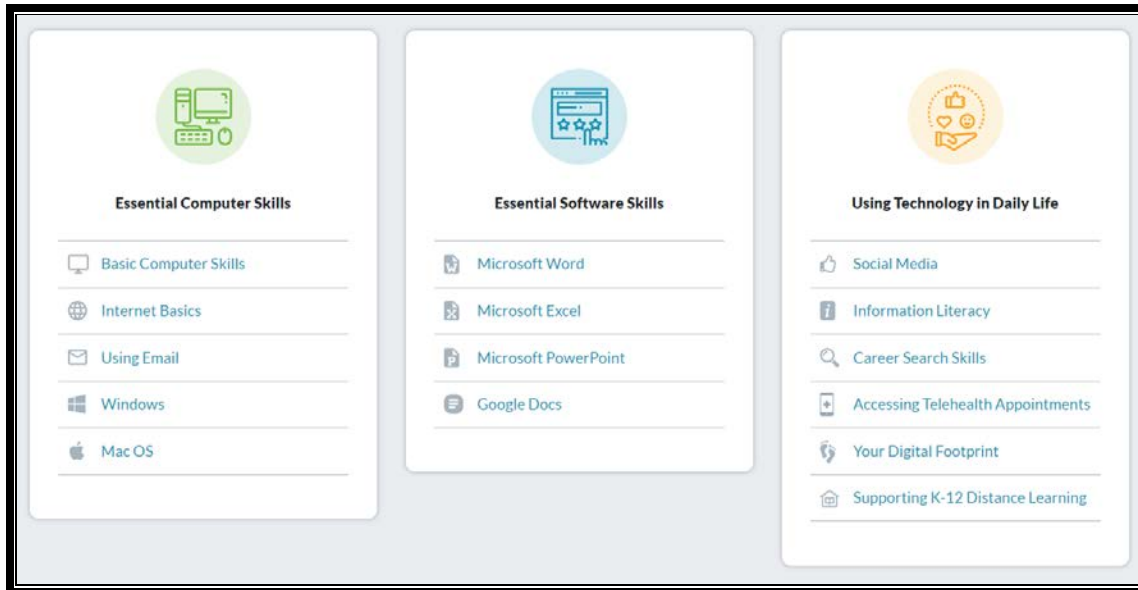
The Office of the State Superintendent of Education, Adult and Family Education (OSSE AFE) announces an update to the *DC Assessment Policy for WIOA Providers and Core Partners v. 4.0* that pertains directly to OSSE AFE-funded Integrated Education & Training (IE&T) providers. This OSSE Guidance Letter (OGL) informs OSSE AFE sub-grantees of the requirement to administer Northstar Digital Literacy assessments as pre- and post-tests to all IE&T students. Additionally, notification of this requirement is in the forthcoming *District of Columbia (DC) Assessment Policy for WIOA Providers and Core Partners v. 5.0* which is currently being reviewed by the US Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE).

[Northstar Digital Literacy](#) is a program of Literacy Minnesota that defines basic skills that adult learners need to perform tasks on computers and online. Online, self-guided modules assess the ability of individuals to perform tasks based on these skills. The [Northstar Digital Literacy Standards](#) are grouped into three categories - Essential Computer Skills, Essential Software Skills, and Using Technology in Daily Life.

Categories include the following assessments:

- Essential Computer Skills
  - 1) Basic Computer Skills
  - 2) Internet Basics
  - 3) Using Email
  - 4) Windows
  - 5) Mac OS
- Essential Software Skills
  - 1) Microsoft Word

- 2) Microsoft Excel
- 3) Microsoft PowerPoint
- 4) Google Docs
- Using Technology in Daily Life
  - 1) Social Media
  - 2) Information Literacy
  - 3) Career Search Skills
  - 4) Accessing Telehealth Appointments
  - 5) Your Digital Footprint
  - 6) Supporting K-12 Distance Learning



With 15 individual assessments, the Northstar Digital Literacy assessments are a valuable tool for OSSE AFE sub-grantees to assess students’ digital learning skills so that students can take advantage of their distance, hybrid and/or Hybrid-Flexible (HyFlex) learning options. Additionally, these assessments document OSSE AFE sub-grantees’ efforts and progress in assisting District residents in mastering digital skills and building digital resilience as we all navigate this technological world in our roles as family members, workers and community members.

**Purpose**

OSSE AFE sub-grantees are required to administer Northstar Digital Literacy Assessments to students to determine their essential computer skills upon entry and before exiting a program. OSSE AFE sub-grantees are required to use the proctor feature when administering all of the Northstar Digital Literacy Assessments, inclusive of the three required assessments under the Essential Computer Skills category listed below:

- 1) Basic Computer Skills;
- 2) Internet Basics; and
- 3) Using Email.

## Proctoring Assessments

All Northstar Digital Literacy assessments administered by OSSE AFE sub-grantees must be proctored. To do this, staff with Northstar user accounts must complete a short Northstar Proctor training for the Northstar system to issue a Proctor Personal Identification Number (PIN). Proctors enter their PIN when administering Northstar assessments in-person and/or remotely. Proctoring assessments allows test takers to be eligible to earn certificates and badges when they pass each proctored assessment. The Northstar administrator at each OSSE AFE IE&T provider's agency may select Proctor in the administrative screen and the staff member will receive an email with instructions and links to watch the Proctor training video and answer questions to become a Northstar proctor.

Northstar Proctors are expected to adhere to the Northstar [Proctor Code of Conduct](#) as follows:

- Proctors should provide a clean, quiet and appropriate space for the assessment session.
- Proctors should never leave an assessment session unsupervised.
- Proctors should observe test takers without being intrusive.
- Proctors should end the current assessment session for any test takers caught violating the Northstar [Test Taker Code of Conduct](#).
- Proctors will not allow any test taker violating the code of conduct to retake the assessment in the same session.
- Proctors will start test-taker check-in and the assessment at the scheduled times.
- Proctors will respect the confidentiality of all test takers.
- Proctors will interact with all test takers in a courteous, fair, professional and nondiscriminatory manner.
- Proctors and Northstar locations must make reasonable accommodations to ensure equitable access for clients with disabilities.
- Proctors should be knowledgeable about computers to assist with any technical problems that might arise.
- Proctors are only allowed to answer questions about the assessment setup or mechanics when administering assessments.
- Proctors may not answer content-related questions as they would jeopardize the validity of the assessment.

## Northstar Scoring

The Northstar assessments are based on the [Northstar Digital Literacy Standards](#). Northstar uses a varying number of questions to assess the relevant standards in each assessment; some standards may be addressed by one question, while other standards may be addressed with several assessment questions. To ensure that each standard is weighted equally, Northstar calculates points on a 1,000-point scale. As such, the total number of points for an assessment is the number of standards multiplied by 1,000.

For example, the Basic Computer Skills assessment has 18 standards, so the highest possible score is 18,000 points. Each question on the assessment is given a number of points equal to 1,000 divided by the number of questions about the standard. In the Basic Computer Skills assessment, there are two questions about Northstar Standard 18 which is: Turn computer and monitor on and off. Therefore, each question about Northstar Standard 18 is worth 500 points (1,000 points per standard divided by two questions about Standard 18 in this assessment = 500 points allocated to each of the questions about Standard 18.) As such, Northstar scores are reported with one decimal place.

Northstar Digital Literacy requires a score of 85 percent or higher to indicate mastery of the majority of the standards and skills measured by each assessment. Rounding up 84.5 percent to 85 percent is prohibited.

### DC Digital Literacy Skill (DLS) Levels for Northstar Assessments

OSSE AFE, in collaboration with Literacy Minnesota, established DC Digital Literacy Skill (DLS) Levels for Northstar assessments being administered by DC providers and partners. Northstar is a program of Literacy Minnesota whose mission is to share the power of learning through education, community building and advocacy.

The DC DLS levels include Level A – Beginning DLS, Level B – High Beginning DLS, Level C – Intermediate DLS and Level D – Advanced DLS. Each of these levels (A, B, C and D) also encompasses metrics that allow OSSE AFE and DC providers and partners to track, monitor and report on student progression. Student attainment of Northstar score (percentage point) gains within each level (e.g., Level C – 54.2% [pre-test] to 58.5% [post-test]), as well as student progression from one DC DLS level to the next (e.g., Level A to B, B to C, or C to D) per the administration of proctored Northstar pre- and post-assessments can be monitored. Please see the chart below.

| District of Columbia (DC)<br>Digital Literacy Skill (DLS) Levels for<br>Northstar Digital Literacy Assessments<br>(All 15 Assessments) |                    |   |  |
|--|--------------------|---|--|
| DC Digital Literacy Skill (DLS) Levels   |                    | DC Score Range<br>Correlation Levels<br>for Northstar<br>Assessment Results | DC Score Ranges for<br>Northstar Assessment<br>Results |
| Level A  | Beginning DLS      | 1   | 0.0% - 4.9%  |
|  |                    | 2   | 5.0% - 9.9%  |
|  |                    | 3   | 10.0% - 14.9%  |
|  |                    | 4   | 15.0% - 19.9%  |
|  |                    | 5   | 20.0% - 24.9%  |
| Level B  | High Beginning DLS | 6   | 25.0% - 29.9%  |
|  |                    | 7   | 30.0% - 34.9%  |
|  |                    | 8   | 35.0% - 39.95%   |
|  |                    | 9   | 40.0% - 44.9%  |
|  |                    | 10  | 45.0% - 49.9%  |
| Level C  | Intermediate DLS   | 11  | 50.0% - 54.9%  |
|  |                    | 12  | 55.0% - 59.9%  |
|  |                    | 13  | 60.0% - 64.9%  |
|  |                    | 14  | 65.0% - 69.9%  |
|  |                    | 15  | 70.0%- 74.9%   |
|  |                    | 16  | 75.0% - 79.9%  |
| Level D  | Advanced DLS       | 17  | 80.0% - 84.9%  |
|  |                    | 18  | 85.0% - 89.9%  |
|  |                    | 19  | 90.0% - 94.9%  |
|  |                    | 20  | 95.0% - 100%   |

*The District of Columbia (DC) Digital Literacy Skill (DLS) Levels for Northstar Digital Literacy Assessments were developed by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, Adult and Family Education (OSSE AFE) for use with DC providers and partners.*

## Guidelines for Administering Northstar Pre-Tests

Each student in an OSSE AFE IE&T program must be administered the following three OSSE AFE required Digital Literacy assessments under the Essential Computer Skills category in a proctored environment:

- 1) Basic Computer Skills;
- 2) Internet Basics; and
- 3) Using Email.

As stated above, Northstar Digital Literacy requires a score of 85 percent or higher to indicate mastery of the majority of the standards measured by each assessment.

If a student does not earn a score of 85 percent on any of the three required assessments - Basic Computer Skills, Internet Basics and Using Email, the student must engage in an instructional intervention (e.g., 1 - 2 hours of self-directed learning, 1-to-1 teacher/tutor-led instruction or classroom instruction using the Northstar curriculum and practice activities, and/or other supplemental resources) for each standard for which the student did not demonstrate mastery. After instruction, sub-grantees are required to administer a post-test - Basic Computer Skills, Internet Basics and/or Using Email - to the student to measure the student's progress and mastery of applicable digital literacy standards.

If a student earns 85 percent or higher in all three of the OSSE AFE required Northstar Digital Literacy assessments – Basic Computer Skills, Internet Basics and Using Email – the OSSE AFE sub-grantee is required to administer an Information Literacy pre-test, and after instruction, administer an Information Literacy post-test so that the student's digital skills progress can be measured.

OSSE AFE sub-grantees are encouraged to administer additional Northstar assessments that align with the students' goals and have students earn Northstar badges that may be included on their resume, LinkedIn page and/or career portfolio.

### OSSE AFE Academic Intervention Correlation Chart

OSSE AFE, in collaboration with Literacy Minnesota, developed an academic intervention correlation chart for DC providers and partners with a recommended number of instructional hours for students based on the number of Standards to Improve (STI) per the Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment Test Items. The chart below should be referenced to determine the time needed for digital literacy skills instruction based on students' DC DLS Level (e.g., Levels A, B, C and D) and the DC Score Range Correlation Levels. The Northstar curriculum and practice activities, as well as supplemental resources and materials, should be used to assist students in acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to make digital literacy skill gains. On an average, 13 to 20 Northstar standards are assessed during the administration of a Northstar assessment irrespective of the number of test items. Please see the list of Northstar assessments in the Background section of this document.

| OSSE AFE Academic Intervention Correlation Chart for the District of Columbia (DC)   |   |           |           |           |           |   |  |                      |
|--|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---|--|----------------------|
| Digital Literacy Skill (DLS) Levels for Northstar Digital Literacy Assessments   |   |           |           |           |           |   |  |                      |
| Recommended Number of Instructional Hours for Students' Academic Intervention Based on the Number of Standards to Improve (STI) Per the Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment Test Items |   |           |           |           |           |   |  |                      |
| DC Digital Literacy Skill (DLS) Levels   | Number of Standards to Improve (STI) for Each Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment |           |           |           |           | Student Commitment of Time (Instruction/Prep for Post-Test) |  | Administer Post-Test |
|  | 1   | 2         | 3         | 4         | 5         | Total Hours   | Examples of Hours/Weeks  |                      |
| Beginning DLS<br>(Score Range 0.0 - 24.9)  | 2 hrs.  | 4 hrs.    | 6 hrs.    | 8 hrs.    | 10 hrs.   | 40  | 2.5 hours per week x 16 weeks, 5 hours per week x 8 weeks, 10 hours per week x 4 weeks | Yes                  |
| High Beginning DLS<br>(Score Range 25.0 - 49.9)  | 1.5 hrs.  | 3 hrs.    | 4.5 hrs.  | 6 hrs.    | 7.5 hrs.  | 30  | 2.5 hours per week x 12 weeks, 5 hours per week x 6 week, 10 hours per week x 3 weeks  | Yes                  |
| Intermediate DLS<br>(Score Range 50.0 - 84.9)  | 1 hr.   | 2 hrs.    | 3 hrs.    | 4 hrs.    | 5 hrs.    | 20  | 2 hours per week x 10 weeks, 4 hours per week x 5 weeks, 10 hours per week x 2 weeks   | Yes                  |
| Advanced DLS<br>(Score Range 85.0 - 100)   | 1 hr.   | 2 hrs.    | 3 hrs.    | 4 hrs.    | 5 hrs.    | TBD   | 1 hour per standard  | N/A                  |
|  | 6   | 7         | 8         | 9         | 10        |   |  |                      |
| Beginning DLS<br>(Score Range 0.0 - 24.9)  | 12 hrs.   | 14 hrs.   | 16 hrs.   | 18 hrs.   | 20 hrs.   | 40  | 2.5 hours per week x 16 weeks, 5 hours per week x 8 weeks, 10 hours per week x 4 weeks | Yes                  |
| High Beginning DLS<br>(Score Range 25.0 - 49.9)  | 9 hrs.  | 10.5 hrs. | 12 hrs.   | 13.5 hrs. | 15 hrs.   | 30  | 2.5 hours per week x 12 weeks, 5 hours per week x 6 week, 10 hours per week x 3 weeks  | Yes                  |
| Intermediate DLS<br>(Score Range 50.0 - 84.9)  | 6 hrs.  | 7 hrs.    | 8 hrs.    | 9 hrs.    | 10 hrs.   | 20  | 2 hours per week x 10 weeks, 4 hours per week x 5 weeks, 10 hours per week x 2 weeks   | Yes                  |
| Advanced DLS<br>(Score Range 85.0 - 100)   | 6 hrs.  | 7 hrs.    | 8 hrs.    | 9 hrs.    | 10 hrs.   | TBD   | 1 hour per standard  | N/A                  |
|  | 11  | 12        | 13        | 14        | 15        |   |  |                      |
| Beginning DLS<br>(Score Range 0.0 - 24.9)  | 22 hrs.   | 24 hrs.   | 26 hrs.   | 28 hrs.   | 30 hrs.   | 40  | 2.5 hours per week x 16 weeks, 5 hours per week x 8 weeks, 10 hours per week x 4 weeks | Yes                  |
| High Beginning DLS<br>(Score Range 25.0 - 49.9)  | 16.5 hrs.   | 18 hrs.   | 19.5 hrs. | 21 hrs.   | 22.5 hrs. | 30  | 2.5 hours per week x 12 weeks, 5 hours per week x 6 week, 10 hours per week x 3 weeks  | Yes                  |
| Intermediate DLS<br>(Score Range 50.0 - 84.9)  | 11 hrs.   | 12 hrs.   | 13 hrs.   | 14 hrs.   | 15 hrs.   | 20  | 2 hours per week x 10 weeks, 4 hours per week x 5 weeks, 10 hours per week x 2 weeks   | Yes                  |
| Advanced DLS<br>(Score Range 85.0 - 100)   | 11 hrs.   | 12 hrs.   | 13 hrs.   | 14 hrs.   | 15 hrs.   | TBD   | 1 hour per standard  | N/A                  |
|  | 16  | 17        | 18        | 19        | 20        |   |  |                      |
| Beginning DLS<br>(Score Range 0.0 - 24.9)  | 32 hrs.   | 34 hrs.   | 36 hrs.   | 38 hrs.   | 40 hrs.   | 40  | 2.5 hours per week x 16 weeks, 5 hours per week x 8 weeks, 10 hours per week x 4 weeks | Yes                  |
| High Beginning DLS<br>(Score Range 25.0 - 49.9)  | 24 hrs.   | 25.5 hrs. | 27 hrs.   | 28.5 hrs. | 30 hrs.   | 30  | 2.5 hours per week x 12 weeks, 5 hours per week x 6 week, 10 hours per week x 3 weeks  | Yes                  |
| Intermediate DLS<br>(Score Range 50.0 - 84.9)  | 16 hrs.   | 17 hrs.   | 18 hrs.   | 19 hrs.   | 20 hrs.   | 20  | 2 hours per week x 10 weeks, 4 hours per week x 5 weeks, 10 hours per week x 2 weeks   | Yes                  |
| Advanced DLS<br>(Score Range 85.0 - 100)   | 16 hrs.   | 17 hrs.   | 18 hrs.   | 19 hrs.   | 20 hrs.   | TBD   | 1 hour per standard  | N/A                  |

## Guidelines for Administering Northstar Post-Tests

OSSE AFE sub-grantees are required to post-test students in each of the required Northstar assessment(s) – Basic Computer Skills, Internet Basics and Using Email – for which the student did not score 85 percent or higher on the pre-test to demonstrate the student’s progress and mastery of the standards that the pre-test assesses.

After the student has engaged in instruction, which may be via a class, teacher/tutor or self-directed learning using the Northstar curriculum and practice activities, the student must be post-tested.

Northstar Digital Literacy recommends that a student spend approximately 1 hour, or more if needed, of learning and practice for each standard before the student is post-tested for any standard for which the student did not demonstrate mastery per the Northstar assessment results.

If the student scores 85 percent or higher on the post-test in Basic Computer Skills, Internet Basics and/or Using Email, then another post-test is not required. However, OSSE AFE recommends that the student complete the practice activity for each standard for which they did not achieve mastery on the post-test.

If a student does not earn a score of 85 percent on the applicable post-test (Basic Computer Skills, Internet Basic and/or Using Email), continue the instructional intervention using the Northstar curriculum and practice activities, and/or other supplemental resources. After the student’s engagement in additional instruction for each standard for which the student did not demonstrate mastery on the post-test, administer another post-test to measure the student’s progress.

OSSE AFE sub-grantees are encouraged to administer additional Northstar assessments that align with the students’ goals and have students earn Northstar badges that may be included on their resume, LinkedIn page and/or career portfolio.

## Data Collection, Reporting and Accountability

OSSE AFE sub-grantees are required to collect and report student demographic, intake, assessment, performance and outcome data in the Literacy Adult and Community Education System (LACES), the state’s management information system, throughout the program year for National Reporting System (NRS) and state accountability purposes.

OSSE AFE sub-grantees are required to enter Northstar assessment data in LACES on the Assessment tab within five business days of the assessment administration date. When adding assessment data to a student’s LACES record on the Assessment tab, click on **Choose Assessment**, scroll to **NRS Not Approved** and click on **Northstar Digital Literacy** to see the Northstar Digital Literacy dialog box.

## Resources

OSSE AFE has purchased a DC State License for Northstar Digital Literacy assessments and make these licenses available to OSSE AFE sub-grantees, DC providers and partners. OSSE AFE has provided a Northstar Digital Literacy license to each OSSE AFE sub-grantee that allows for an unlimited number of students and staff to be added as users in the Northstar Digital Literacy system.

## **Professional Development**

Because training is essential to quality Northstar Digital Literacy assessment implementation, OSSE coordinates the provision of Northstar Digital Literacy training and monthly implementation check-in sessions for OSSE AFE sub-grantees, DC providers and partners. Past Northstar training webinar recordings and handouts are available on the OSSE website at [Adult Education Instructors | osse \(dc.gov\)](#).

## **Technical Assistance**

Northstar Technical Support is only available by submitting a tech support ticket on the Northstar website, which can also be found by clicking [Contact Us](#). When you log into your Northstar account, click on [Create Support Ticket](#). Technical assistance is not available via telephone. [osse.dc.gov/service/adult-education-instructors](https://osse.dc.gov/service/adult-education-instructors).

For additional information, please email [OSSE.AFETA@DC.gov](mailto:OSSE.AFETA@DC.gov).