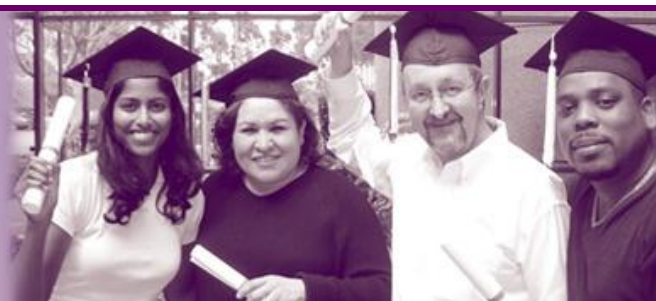




# NEWS



Fall 2012

Welcome to the latest issue of *NEDP News*, an informational newsletter for the NEDP community.

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## Message from Jim Harrison, CASAS NEDP Project Director

*Author: Jim Harrison*

This has been an extremely eventful summer and early fall. The NEDP team has been working assiduously to finalize the assessment items for Geography and History as well as Science and Cultural Literacy, with the final items to be developed for the January 2013 full launch. We will begin the soft launch of these competency areas toward the end of October. During this period the NEDP team has prepared numerous aids and tutorials to assist clients and assessors in using various aspects of the new system. Our team has begun analyzing data and reviewing countless feedback from clients and assessors to inform assessment item modification, to improve scoring criteria, and to make enhancements to the online system functionality. We anticipate completing all of these tasks well before we begin to roll out the new system in January 2013.

CASAS is trying to be as flexible as possible in helping local NEDP agencies transition to an online system. Some agencies have expressed concern that they need an additional few months to prepare for the web-based version. Some agencies feel they first need to improve their technology access and readiness capacity, while other agencies feel they need to strengthen their remediation components for clients who are not adequately prepared at program entry. Regardless, CASAS will allow these agencies to defer full implementation until July 2013.

This October also saw the biennial National External Diploma Program Council Conference. The conference was well attended with representation from Connecticut, Maryland, the District of Columbia, New York, Rhode Island and Virginia. A major theme of the conference focused on helping local agencies prepare for the implementation of the new online NEDP, so timing could not have been more opportune. CASAS NEDP staff delivered workshops on the following:

## Message from Jim Harrison, CASAS NEDP Project Director (continued)

- The New Web-Based NEDP: What Will the NEW Online System Mean for My Clients and My Program
- NEDP Online System: New Developments, Features, and Capabilities
- Writing Assessment in the New NEDP
- EDP: A Successful Transition Model
- NEDP and Technology Skills for a New System

NEDP practitioners and soft launch participants presented hands-on workshops:

- Are You Ready for the New NEDP?
- Soft Launch Panel Discussion: CASAS, NY, CT, MD, and VA
- Exploring the ICDI: Facilitating Your Client's Choices
- Supporting Your Candidate in the Web-Based NEDP
- Marketing NEDP: Sharing Ideas and Strategies
- The New ABE Class: Preparing for the Next Step
- Exploring the NEDPC Resources Page: An NEDP Scavenger Hunt

Michael Beck, a member of the CASAS Board of Directors and a proponent of the NEDP, presented the workshop Common Core: State Standards and Adult Education: They Will Affect You!. The keynote speaker, Dr. Alice Christine, underscored the importance of how technology can enhance teaching and learning. These presentations may be found at the NEDPC website (<http://nedpc.net/>) as well as the CASAS NEDP website ([www.nedp.org](http://www.nedp.org)).

These are exciting times for the NEDP! For the first time since its inception, the NEDP will undergo a fundamental transformation from a paper-and-pencil system to a web-based system. The redesign reflects quality high school standards, incorporating the Common Core State Standards and higher level, more challenging thinking and problem-solving skills. Technology is infused throughout the entire program, and clients will need to research information to demonstrate competencies. Those of us at CASAS look forward to this inaugural journey with you!

## NEDP Soft Launch Update: Moving Toward an Online Transition

*Author: Melissa Dayton*

As fall begins, CASAS reports great strides in the ongoing redevelopment of NEDP. Summer was a productive period for the development of both assessment (task) items and online system functionality.

To date, five soft launches are currently underway involving 33 agencies in six states and the District of Columbia. The soft launches cover the competency areas of Health Literacy, Civic Literacy and Community Participation, Consumer Awareness and Financial Literacy (groups A and B), and Twenty-First Century Workplace. New soft launches due to begin in late October include Geography and History, Science, and Cultural Literacy. Agencies that have not yet participated in a soft launch are receiving notification about their participation during October.

With many agencies several months into their soft launch, enough client data has been generated for the CASAS evaluation team to analyze each assessment item for validity and reliability. The team views each item through a variety of lenses, including client demographics, diagnostic scores, patterns in responses, and PTA data. The goal is to ensure that NEDP assessment items perform consistently across the range and diversity of the NEDP client population. As findings warrant, items will be adjusted and in some cases “resized” to improve the overall program flow.

While the assessment team has been developing and refining NEDP task items, software developers at CASAS have been hard at work developing online reporting and monitoring systems. A number of developments and enhancements were made over the summer, including:

- A revamped graphic format to better accommodate individuals with visual impairments. Improved color contrast and navigation buttons provide an online environment that is accessible for all NEDP candidates.
- Reporting capability that allows assessors to generate customized feedback reports. The first batch of online reports display: Demonstrated Items, Not Demonstrated Items with feedback statements, and a Consolidated Report that displays Demonstrated and Not Demonstrated reports. These reports can be updated and printed at the push of a button. Additional reports are currently under development.
- Refinements to item evaluation criteria and “pop-up” box functionality. As many know, the new NEDP items are evaluated with the use of on-screen pop-up boxes that display the evaluation criteria and allow assessors to evaluate items as **D** or **ND** and provide specific feedback. CASAS has improved the precision of these boxes to reduce the amount of rework necessary if PTA is required. Evaluation results and assessor feedback notes automatically populate the online reports. We anticipate this system will provide greater efficiency over the booklet-based system of evaluation.

These enhancements and others have been informed by (sometimes originating with) the ongoing feedback provided by NEDP assessors and clients. The soft launch process yields two types of data necessary to the redevelopment process: a) the responses generated by candidates completing the soft launch which CASAS analyzes to confirm to the validity of each assessment item; and b) the user feedback that allows CASAS to make system refinements that will make the online program user-friendly and responsive to assessors’ and clients’ needs. While each soft launch is designed to generate an initial data *N* of 100 for each assessment item, CASAS will continue its analyses to a formal *N* of 300 and beyond. (Agencies participating in the soft launches are being asked to contribute an initial *N* proportional to agency size and enrollments.) Ongoing feedback will continue to be important.

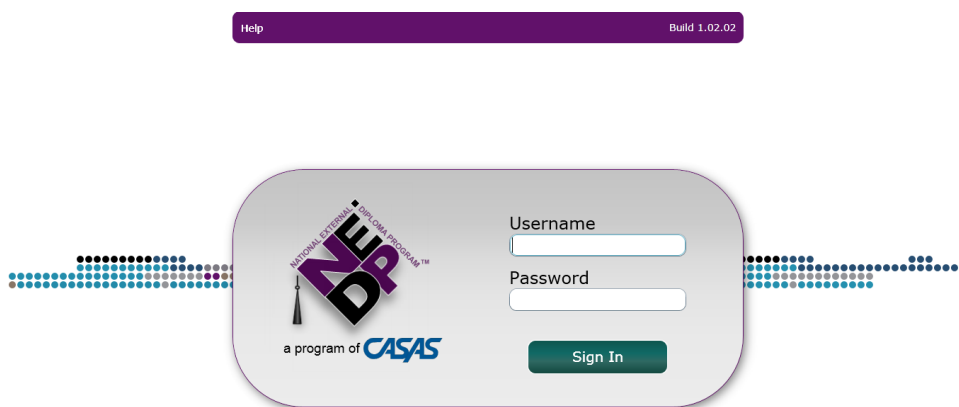
Following the rollout this fall of the remaining soft launch areas, a full launch of the online NEDP system begins in January 2013 for agencies new to NEDP and for current implementers that have the capacity and familiarity with the new system to make the online transition. CASAS has recently issued policy memoranda explaining the overall transition process and will continue to provide guidance over the coming weeks and months. For additional information or clarification, contact Jim Harrison ([jharrison@casas.org](mailto:jharrison@casas.org)) or Melissa Dayton ([mdayton@casas.org](mailto:mdayton@casas.org)).

One of the exciting features of the new *Online NEDP* is the potential for accessibility for all clients, including those who have disabilities. The goal in the new design of computer-based assessments is to make them usable for all clients so that special adaptations are minimized or not needed at all for clients who have specific learning, physical and emotional disabilities and other disabilities.

The performance-based foundation of NEDP assessments has always provided more opportunities for clients of all ability levels to demonstrate knowledge. This type of assessment is more likely to level the playing field for clients who have disabilities compared to paper-and-pencil assessments. With the new *Online NEDP* there are even more accessibility features built into the online program. Some of these have to do with the technology built into the software and some are built into the item design. Examples for each are listed below.

### Technology

- Screens use color contrasts to optimize readability for clients with low vision



- Item displays and questions have a larger and clearer font for better discrimination
- Resource icons are noted with white text on dark teal background
- Tutorials are available to learn basic technology needed to operate the system and demonstrate tasks
- Keyboard can be used to respond to questions for clients unable to manipulate mouse
- Text in items is compatible with text-to-speech screen reader software (e.g., JAWS)
- Answers to questions can be given using speech-to-text capability (e.g., Dragon Naturally Speaking)

### Item Design

- Items are written so that background knowledge is not assumed
- Resources are web-based or PDF files for easy access
- Tutorials are available for more involved content-specific purposes
- Assessment tasks are framed in the context in which they will be used in real life

- Introductions to items are written to provide context and purpose of item before answering questions
- Tabs are clearly labeled so all parts of the item are visible at first glance (e.g., Overview, Activity A, Activity B, In-Office Check, Feedback, and Tutorials)

**NEDP** a program of **CASAS**

32/46 help

Personnel: App Admin  
Client: Caroline Test

Log Out  
Change

### Consumer Awareness and Financial Literacy Group B

#### Household Budgets

**Overview** Activity A In-Office Check Feedback Tutorials

**Purpose:** Create a monthly budget and analyze the results.

**Introduction**  
To ensure sound fiscal health, individuals need to be aware of how much money they are earning and how much they are spending each month. They also need to know where their money is going. When these facts are known, a practical plan to achieve short- and long-term financial goals is possible. Developing a monthly budget and analyzing the results helps to achieve financial goals.

In **Activity A**, you will examine one person's monthly budget and expenses, create a spreadsheet to categorize and total the expenses, and analyze the results. You will also look for ways to adjust the person's budget to meet financial goals.

In the **In-Office Check**, you will examine a family's annual budget and expenses, analyze the results and represent them graphically.

**Required Technology Skills:** Create a pie chart using spreadsheet software and update the file.

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CASAS remains committed to continually improving accessibility features for all clients. We value your feedback in advancing this cause to the extent possible. Use the Feedback tab or contact the NEDP Team to submit ideas.



Author: Christine O'Hara

Thank you to all who attended the 32nd annual CASAS National Summer Institute, June 12 – 14, 2012, in San Diego! The Institute was a huge success with nearly 550 attendees from 23 states, the District of Columbia, and several countries. More than 66 workshops, training sessions, and panel discussions that focused on key issues in adult education and training were offered.



The NEDP strand at the Institute has become an excellent source of professional development for NEDP staff. This year we were pleased to include two practitioners as presenters.

We were fortunate to have Felicia Dickinson from East Haven Adult Education, in Connecticut present *Practitioner Tips for Implementing NEDP*. Her agency is soft launching the new NEDP Online Assessment system, and she provided valuable insight on the challenges and successes of participating in a soft launch.

Yajaira Tejada from 1199SEIU Funds, N.Y. sat with us on our panel discussion, *NEDP Soft Launch – Transitioning from Paper-and-Pencil to Web-Based Delivery: Lessons Learned*. She focused on the assessor and client perspective of the new online system. Based on session evaluations, Yajaira was a hit! We would like to thank both presenters for taking the time to share their experiences at the Institute.

To view the NEDP Summer Institute workshop presentations visit our website at [www.nedp.org](http://www.nedp.org) and select CASAS Summer Institute on the left side bar. Presentations from past Institutes are there as well.



### Save the Date

Join us for the next Summer Institute!

June 11-13, 2013  
Town and Country Resort & Convention Center  
San Diego, California

Registration information will be available in January 2013.

<http://www.casas.org/training-and-support/SI>

## Upcoming Holiday Hours

### Holiday Hours

CASAS will be closed for three weeks during the upcoming holiday season. CASAS will provide the same efficient customer service for processing NEDP orders during the rest of the month. Please see the schedules below.

November 2012				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
←-----CASAS CLOSED-----→				

December 2012				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
←-----CASAS CLOSED-----→				
24	25	26	27	28
←-----CASAS CLOSED-----→				
31	1	2	3	4
←-----CASAS CLOSED-----→				

## Contact Us

We are ready to answer your questions and to assist you with your program needs.

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## NEDP News – Previous Issues

*NEDP News* is our primary vehicle for keeping NEDP practitioners and stakeholders updated about the latest NEDP developments, including the redesign. We welcome your feedback and encourage you to share this newsletter with your colleagues.

You may view previous issues at [www.nedp.org](http://www.nedp.org); select NEDP News.

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