

State Testing 2008

What You Need to Know

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Every spring, the state tests all students in grades 3-8 and 10 to make sure their learning is on track. The results from this testing are important to us all.

Parents can use the results as another piece of information about their child's progress from year to year. Schools can better understand the strengths and weaknesses of their programs, so that they can improve instruction. And everyone stays focused on the fact that all students – not just quick-learners or university-bound students – must have a solid set of skills and knowledge while in school and after graduation.

During state testing, most students take the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). About one percent of students participate in the Washington Alternate Assessment System, an equally challenging program for some students in special education programs.

Washington teachers developed and continue to guide our state's testing system. They, with the help of parents and business and community leaders, created the state's learning standards for reading, writing, math and science. Teachers also helped build the WASL, which measures student learning of those standards.

If you have questions or concerns about your child's learning, please contact your child's teacher or school. To learn more about the state's testing system, please visit www.wasinfo.com.

Thank you for sending your child to school on testing days – and every other day of the school year – ready to do his or her best work.

Who Gets Tested and When?

The federal No Child Left Behind Act requires yearly testing of students to measure their progress in reading, math and science. Washington also tests students in writing. Students must pass the reading and writing High School WASL, a state-approved alternative or an assessment for students in special education to be eligible to graduate. High school students also must meet math standards or continue to earn math credits and test yearly to be eligible to graduate.

Grade	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
Reading	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<i>Optional for students wanting to take 10th-grade test early.*</i>	✓	<i>Necessary only if student has not met WASL graduation requirement.</i>	
Math	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Writing		✓			✓	✓				
Science			✓			✓				

* Testing for 9th graders is limited to Reading, Writing and Math.

State Testing and Reporting Timeline

March 10-13:	Reading and Writing High School WASL
April 15-18:	Math and Science High School WASL
April 14- May 2:	WASL testing for grades 3-8
By June 10:	Release of statewide High School WASL results
By June 13:	WASL Score Reports sent to families for grades 10, 11 and 12
June 9-27:	Registration period for August High School WASL
August 11-14:	August High School WASL testing
Early Sept.:	WASL results released for all students
By end of Sept.:	All WASL reports sent home

What Does a WASL Score Mean?

Students receive a score for each WASL test taken. Scores are based on how an individual student performed, so you won't find percentiles often provided by other standardized tests. Scores fall into one of four levels:

- Level 4 Exceeds State Standards:** Represents advanced mastery of a subject's skills and knowledge.
- Level 3 Meets State Standards:** Represents mastery of a subject's skills and knowledge. Student knows and can analyze information and can apply knowledge and skills to real-world situations.
- Level 2 Below State Standard:** Represents some mastery of a subject's skills and knowledge.
- Level 1 Well-Below State Standard:** Represents little to no mastery of a subject's skills and knowledge.

Sample WASL Questions

These questions came from actual WASL tests given in 2007. To review more questions like these, along with scored, unidentified student responses, visit www.k12.wa.us/assessment/WASL/testquestions.aspx.

4th Grade Reading

The following question is based on a reading passage about a lion.

1. Explain why the zookeeper threw meatballs on the steps. Use two details from the story in your answer.

7th Grade Math

The following question involves using skills from Number Sense and Algebraic Sense.

Tim and his two sisters decided to send a gift to their older brother in the army. The cost of mailing was \$0.37 for the first ounce and \$0.23 for each additional ounce. The package weighed one pound. How much did it cost to mail the gift?

- A. \$3.45
- B. \$3.68
- C. \$3.82
- D. \$5.92

8th Grade Science

Students are given a description of an investigation and asked to analyze the investigation, draw conclusions and plan a new investigation.

In one scenario, two students investigate the effect of different acidities of water on the growth of radish plants. The data from the investigation shows that the plants grew tallest with water at a pH of 6.

Given the results from the investigation, answer the following four multiple-choice questions, write a conclusion that answers the investigative question, describe possible sources of error in the investigation, and plan a new investigation to find out the effect of different amounts of pH 6 water on the height of plants.

High School Writing

High School writing includes two prompts: expository and persuasive. Below is an example of a persuasive prompt.

In your community, many businesses have decided that high school students must have at least a "B" grade-point average to be hired. Take a position on this issue. Write a multiple-paragraph letter to the editor of your local paper **PERSUADING** newspaper readers to agree with your position.

Keep it All in Perspective

Students and parents can feel pressured by state testing, but the test should not be the center of attention. Core skills and knowledge matter most.

- **Encourage your child to do his/her best.** If your child's score report shows help is needed in certain areas, that is not a bad a thing. Schools know how to target help.
- **Think about your child's test day routine.** Unless you sense your child needs a different routine during testing (e.g., more sleep or more physical activity), follow whatever routine already helps him/her be successful in school.
- **Talk with your child about the testing experience.** Some students find it helpful to talk about the tests. If your child says s/he struggled with any parts of the test, talk to your child's teacher to find out if s/he has the same issues in the classroom.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will I get my child's test back?

No. You will get a score report for your child but not the test itself. WASL test questions are used for several years, so we need to keep the tests secure.

Can I view my child's test?

Yes. Parents can request to review their child's test booklet(s), starting Sept. 1, 2008. For more information: <http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/StudentRecordRequest.aspx>.

Can I appeal my child's score?

It depends. Only the scores from an assessment used to meet the high school graduation requirement may be appealed. Scores for grades 3-8 may not be appealed. For more information: <http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/Appeals.aspx>.



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