

WASL Replacement Plan Nears Completion

Superintendent Dorn making promised changes to state testing system; will ask Legislature for delay in math and science graduation requirements

OLYMPIA — State Superintendent Randy Dorn continues to deliver on his promise of replacing the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) with an improved assessment system that will debut in spring 2010. However, Dorn remains concerned that the timeline for the new math and science graduation requirements is neither realistic nor fair.

The WASL will be replaced next school year with the grades 3-8 Measurements of Student Progress (MSP) and the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE). Beginning in spring 2010, the new state tests will be shorter, the time it takes to administer them will be cut in half and online testing will be piloted in reading and math.

Next spring, about 25 percent of students statewide in grades 6-8 are expected to participate in voluntary online testing. By 2012, the majority of grades and content areas will be online.

Online testing is voluntary for elementary and middle schools during the next two years, but will be required in 2012. Online high school testing will not be piloted until 2011 and will be available statewide in 2012.

“The move to online testing is an important first step in making our state assessment system a true tool that teachers and families can use to help assess how well a student is learning,” Dorn said. “While we’re not the first state to implement online testing, we’ll certainly be ahead of most. We’re confident this is the direction the rest of the nation will soon be going.”

State budget cuts delayed one major component of Dorn’s online testing plan. Voluntary fall online testing in grades 3-8, originally set to begin in fall 2010, has been eliminated for now. However, OSPI has received funding from the state Legislature to develop a diagnostic online assessment system to be used in classrooms (see below for more details).

Replacing the WASL, however, does not eliminate the [state high school graduation requirements](#), which, among other requirements, call for high school students to pass the reading and writing state exams and to either pass the math test or earn two credits of math after 10th grade. Students can also meet the assessment requirement by passing other [state-approved alternatives](#).

While Dorn supports the state assessment graduation requirements, he doesn’t believe the timeline is realistic for students in the Class of 2013 to perform well on the math end-of-course assessments or the science HSPE, both of which are currently being developed. With new high school standards debuting in math in 2011 and science in 2012, Dorn will ask the state Legislature next year to delay the math and science graduation requirements by at least one year because the Class of 2013 is the first to be required to pass reading, writing, math and science.

WASL Score Release

Superintendent Randy Dorn will release statewide high school WASL scores on June 18 at noon. The press conference, located at the Puget Sound Educational Service District office in Renton, will be broadcast live on TVW’s Web site at www.tvw.org and on the K-20 videoconference network.

“Students in the Class of 2013 won’t have enough time with the new state learning standards in math and science to be fairly assessed,” Dorn said. “That’s a huge concern considering it’s a requirement for graduation. I’m not backing away from the graduation requirements, but we need to give teachers and students additional time with the new math and science standards before students can be expected to have a fair chance to pass the tests.”

A major concern for Dorn has been the amount of time it takes to administer the WASL. Beginning next year, that time will basically be cut in half with single sessions in reading, math and science taking no more than 90 minutes on the MSP and 120 minutes on the HSPE. That’s compared to two 90-minute sessions in grades 3-8 for those subjects on the WASL and two 120-minute sessions in high school. For 2010, writing remains unchanged, but will likely be moved to an online platform in the next year or two.

“I’ve heard from educators around the state that the students suffer from testing fatigue,” Dorn said. “By cutting the testing time in half, we shouldn’t see that any longer. This is a significant change.”

The testing dates for the High School Proficiency Exams will generally remain the same in spring 2010 as they have in the past, except reading, math and science will take only one session:

- Reading, March 16 (only one 120 min. session)
- Writing, March 17-18 (two 120 min. sessions)
- Math, April 13 (one 120 min. session)
- Science April 15 (one 120 min. session)

2010 State Testing Times

The following are the estimated testing times for reading, math and science for the Measurements of Student Progress and High School Proficiency Exams in spring 2010. The testing times are basically cut in half:

- **Grades 3-5:** Single-session 75-minute tests
- **Grades 6-8:** Single-session 90-minute tests
- **High school:** Single-session 120-minute tests
- **Note:** Writing tests still given in two sessions

The testing window for elementary and middle schools will be moved into May. Schools participating in traditional paper-and-pencil testing will administer the MSP from May 12-28. Those schools choosing to participate in the first year of online testing will have a slightly longer testing window (May 3 to June 4). Individual schools can decide whether to volunteer for spring online testing in 2010 and 2011.

The new assessments will no longer feature long-answer items (worth four points) and will be constructed of multiple choice and completion items (each worth one point) and short-answer items (two points). If possible, already developed long-answer items will be broken down into one- and two-point items. The MSP and HSPE will continue to assess students on the state learning standards in reading and writing. The new math standards for grades 3-8 will be assessed on the spring 2010 MSP and new high school math standards will be assessed in 2011.

While state fall online testing is no longer an option because of budget cuts, OSPI will be able to provide a diagnostic testing tool for teachers and students beginning in the fall of 2010 thanks to \$4.4 million from the Legislature ([House Bill 1244, Sec. 513](#)). OSPI envisions a system in which

students will be able to take online practice tests throughout the school year based on specific sections within the state learning standards. The results of the online practice tests will be available immediately and assist teachers in identifying any possible weaknesses in a student's learning.

In fall 2009, students will be able to view a tutorial of the MSP online testing system, allowing them to familiarize themselves with the system far in advance of spring 2010 testing.

About OSPI

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