

## WASHINGTON'S HIGH SCHOOL ASSESSMENT SYSTEM: STUDENT PERFORMANCE ON THE WASL—UPDATED THROUGH SUMMER 2007

The 2006 Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) to conduct a “review and statistical analysis of Washington assessment of student learning data.”<sup>1</sup> The Institute was instructed to:

- Increase understanding of the students who did not meet standard in one or more areas of assessment;
- Identify the characteristics of those students; and
- Identify possible barriers to student success on the WASL.

The Institute’s final report on the WASL was released in December 2007;<sup>2</sup> at that time, results from the most recent administration of the WASL—summer 2007—were not yet available. This report uses updated data to re-analyze WASL completion and performance for students in the classes of 2008 and 2009.

The updated analyses for students in the class of 2008 include four opportunities they have had to take the WASL: spring 2006, summer 2006, spring 2007, and summer 2007. The updated analyses for students in the class of 2009 include data from two WASL administrations: spring 2007 and summer 2007.

The results of this analysis are organized around three primary questions:

- How many students **need to take** the WASL?
- How many students have **completed** the WASL?
- How many students have **met standard** on the WASL?

<sup>1</sup> SSB 6618 § 2(1).

<sup>2</sup> W. Cole & A. Pennucci. (2007). *Washington’s high school assessment system: A review of student performance on the WASL and alternative assessment options*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Document No. 07-12-2202.

### Summary

The 2006 Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) to conduct a “review and statistical analysis of Washington assessment of student learning data.”

This paper updates the analyses presented in the Institute’s final report on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). The analyses include four opportunities for students in the class of 2008 to take the WASL (spring 2006, summer 2007, spring 2007, and summer 2007) and two opportunities for students in the class of 2009 to take the WASL (spring 2007 and summer 2007).

The results of our updated analyses are as follows:

- As of summer 2007, 87 percent of students in the class of 2008 have satisfied the WASL graduation requirement in reading and writing. This met-standard rate drops to 64 percent when performance on the math WASL is considered.
- Seventy-seven percent of students in the class of 2009 have met standard in reading and writing; however, students continue to struggle in math. Half (51.2 percent) of students in the class of 2009 have met standard when performance on the math WASL is considered.
- WASL performance varies by student characteristics. Met-standard rates are lower for African American, American Indian, and Hispanic students than for Asian and White students; for low-income students compared with their higher-income peers; for English language learners relative to English-speaking students; and for students with one or more disabilities compared with non-disabled students.

## How Many Students Need to Take the WASL?

In Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) databases, every student in the class of 2008 is assigned a “test type” indicating which assessment—WASL, WASL-Basic, WAAS Portfolio, or WAAS-DAW—they are supposed to take for each subject.<sup>3</sup> Exhibit 1 reports the number and percentage of students in the class of 2008 who were scheduled or “slated” to take the WASL and/or alternate assessments. The exhibit is based on the number of students enrolled as 11th graders in 2006–07.

Most students—93.9 percent—were slated to take the “regular” WASL rather than an alternate assessment (WAAS). An additional 4.1 percent of students were slated for alternate assessments in all three subjects (reading, writing, and math).

All other students (2 percent) were scheduled to take some combination of the WASL and the WAAS. The WAAS may be used only for content areas in which a student receives special education services.

**Exhibit 1**

### Number of Students in the Class of 2008 Who Were Slated to Take the WASL and/or WAAS

Reading	Writing	Math	Number	%
<b>Slated for the “regular” WASL</b>				
WASL	WASL	WASL	67,653	93.9
<b>Slated for alternate assessments (WAAS)</b>				
WAAS	WAAS	WAAS	2,969	4.1
<b>Slated for a combination of the WASL and WAAS</b>				
WASL	WASL	WAAS	530	0.7
WAAS	WAAS	WASL	136	0.2
WASL	WAAS	WAAS	214	0.3
WASL	WAAS	WASL	242	0.3
WAAS	WASL	WAAS	185	0.3
WAAS	WASL	WASL	116	0.2
<b>Total</b>				
Either	Either	Either	72,045	100.0

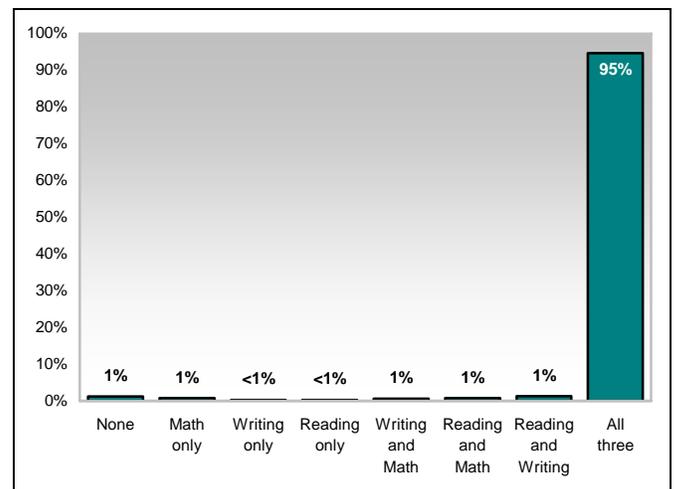
WASL = Washington Assessment of Student Learning.  
WAAS = Washington Alternate Assessment System.

<sup>3</sup> The WASL-Basic, WAAS Portfolio, and WAAS-DAW are alternate assessments for students in special education. For more information, see: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2007). *Accommodations guidelines for the students served by special education programs*. Available online at <[www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/publications.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/publications.aspx)>; W. Cole & R. Barnoski. (2006). *Tenth-grade alternate assessments for special populations: Summary results*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Document No. 06-11-2202.

## How Many Students Have Completed the WASL?

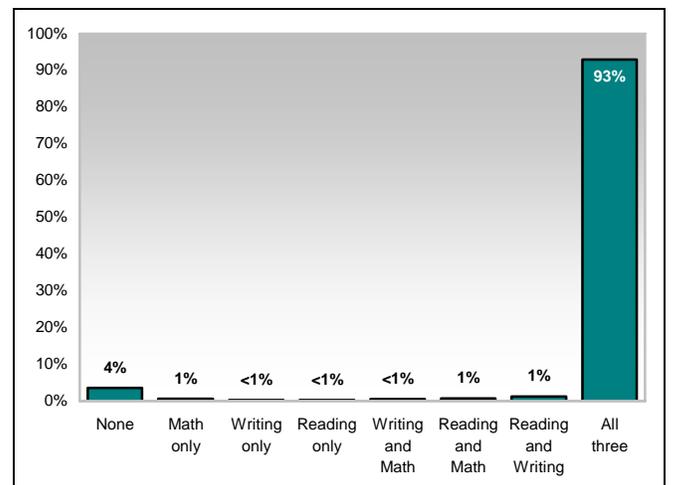
Exhibit 2 shows that most students in the class of 2008 have completed (but not necessarily met standard on) the WASL. As of summer 2007, 95 percent of students in the class of 2008 who were enrolled as 11th graders in 2006–07 and who were slated to take the WASL (n=67,653) had completed all three reading, writing, and math assessments. Exhibit 3 adds students who were slated for at least one subject-area WAAS: 93 percent of all students enrolled last spring (n=72,045) completed either the WASL or WAAS as scheduled.

**Exhibit 2**  
Percentage of Students Completing the WASL as of Summer 2007



Based on the number of public school students in the class of 2008 who were enrolled as 11th graders in 2006–07 and who were slated to take the WASL (n=67,653).

**Exhibit 3**  
Percentage of Students Completing the WASL or WAAS as of Summer 2007



Based on the number of public school students in the class of 2008 who were enrolled as 11th graders in 2006–07 and who were slated to take either the WASL or the WAAS (n=72,045).

Although most students included in this analysis had completed the WASL by summer 2007, Exhibit 4 indicates that completion rates continue to vary by student characteristics.<sup>4</sup>

**Exhibit 4**  
**WASL Completion Rates by Student Characteristics**  
 As of Summer 2007

- **Gender:** 95.3 percent of females have completed the reading, writing, and math sections of the WASL compared with 94.2 percent of males.
- **Race/Ethnicity:** Completion rates are lowest among American Indians (89.8 percent), followed by African Americans (92.1 percent), Hispanics (94.1 percent), Whites (95.9 percent), and Asians (97.5 percent).
- **Low Income:** Students who are eligible for free/reduced-price meals have a lower completion rate (91.6 percent) compared with higher-income students (96.3 percent).
- **Language Barriers:** English language learners (ELL) complete the WASL at a lower rate (90.2 percent) than other students (95 percent).
- **Disability Status:** Students with at least one documented disability have the lowest completion rate—76.4 percent—of any student characteristic considered in this report.

Student Characteristics	Completion Rates	
	Reading, Writing, and Math	Reading and Writing
All Students	94.7	95.6
Female	95.3	96.2
Male	94.2	95.1
Asian	97.5	98.0
African American	92.1	93.1
American Indian	89.8	91.2
Hispanic	94.1	95.2
White	95.9	96.6
Low Income	91.6	93.1
Not Low Income	96.3	96.8
ELL	90.2	91.5
Not ELL	95.0	95.8
Disability	76.4	76.8
No Disability	96.0	97.1

Exhibit 4 also reports the percentage of students who have completed the reading and writing portions of the WASL, irrespective of the math assessment. Completion rates increase slightly when math is not considered but are characterized by the same discrepancies as reading and writing.

<sup>4</sup> For comparison with rates of completing the spring 2006 WASL administration see R. Barnoski & W. Cole. (2007). *Who has and has not yet completed the 10th-grade WASL?* Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Document No. 07-02-2203.

## How Many Students Have Met Standard on the WASL?

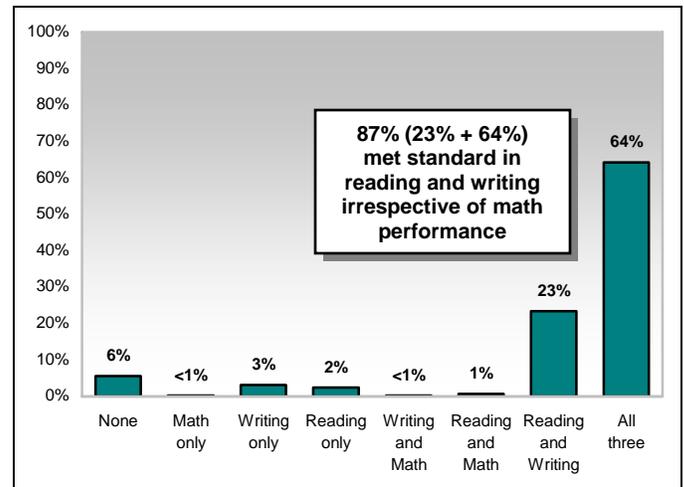
Exhibit 5 shows that 64 percent of students in the class of 2008 who were enrolled as 11th graders in 2006–07 and who were slated to take the WASL (n=67,653) had met standard in reading, writing, and math. An additional 23 percent of students had met standard in reading and writing, but not math. Taken together, these results indicate that **87 percent of students in the class of 2008 satisfied the WASL graduation requirement for reading and writing** as of summer 2007. Approximately 7 percent of students had met standard in either reading or writing but not both, and 6 percent of students had not met standard in any subject.

Met-standard rates decline somewhat when all students—those who are slated to take the WAAS in addition to those slated for the WASL—are included (n=72,045). This decline occurs because students who take the WAAS have lower met-standard rates than students who take the WASL. As illustrated in Exhibit 6, 62 percent of students who were slated for either the WASL or the WAAS met standard in reading, writing, and math; an additional 23 percent met standard in reading and writing but not math.

Using this method of calculating met-standard rates, **85 percent of students have satisfied the WASL or WAAS graduation requirement for reading and writing**. Again, 8 percent met standard in either reading or writing, but not both.

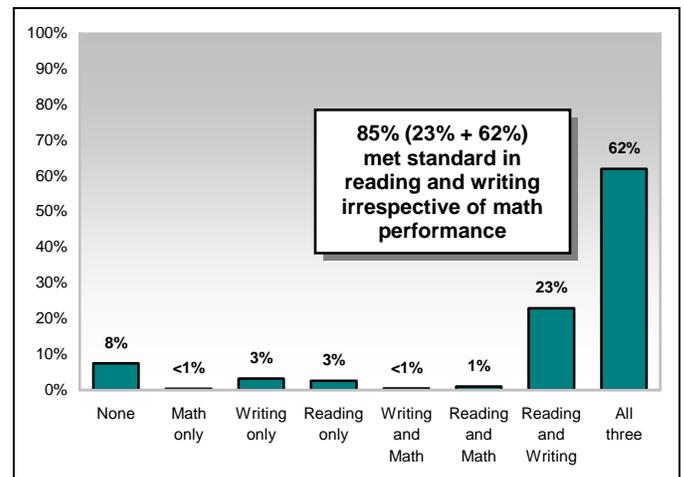
These results may overestimate the percentage of students who are eligible to graduate because they do not include information about whether other high school graduation requirements—the culminating project, a high school and beyond plan, and credit requirements—have been met. Conversely, the results slightly underestimate the percentage of students who have satisfied the WASL graduation requirement because they do not include students who met standard using an approved alternative assessment. The results also do not account for students who dropped or transferred out of Washington State’s public schools prior to the 2006–07 school year or were held back to repeat a grade.

**Exhibit 5**  
**Percentage of Students Meeting Standard on the WASL**  
 As of Summer 2007



Note: Based on the number of students in the class of 2008 who were enrolled as 11th graders in 2006–07 and who were slated to take the WASL (n=67,653).

**Exhibit 6**  
**Percentage of Students Meeting Standard on the WASL or WAAS**  
 As of Summer 2007



Note: Based on the number of students in the class of 2008 who were enrolled as 11th graders in 2006–07 and who were slated to take either the WASL or the WAAS (n=72,045).

Among students who have not met standard on the WASL, what percentage had level 1 (Below Basic) and level 2 (Basic) scores? Exhibit 7 demonstrates that the majority of students who have not met standard in reading, writing, or math scored in the level 2 range—78 percent, 79 percent, and 61 percent, respectively. These students are closer to meeting standard than level 1 students. For comparison, we also report the number of students with level 3 (Proficient) or level 4 (Advanced) scores.

Exhibit 8 reports met-standard rates by student characteristics. We calculate met-standard rates as the percentage of (1) all students who were slated to take the WASL, and (2) students who completed the WASL. As with the analysis of completion rates, we report met-standard rates for reading, writing, and math as well as for reading and writing.

As we found in our series of WASL reports,<sup>5</sup> performance on the WASL varies by student characteristics, often dramatically. We focus here on students who met standard in reading and writing—the WASL graduation requirement—as a percentage of students who were slated to take the WASL.

- **Gender.** 90 percent of females have met standard in reading and writing compared with 84.2 percent of males.
- **Race/Ethnicity.** Met-standard rates are lowest among Hispanics (75.8 percent), followed by American Indians (76.3 percent), African Americans (77.5 percent), Whites (90.1 percent), and Asians (91.9 percent).
- **Low Income.** Approximately three-quarters (77 percent) of students eligible for free/reduced-price meals met standard in reading and writing compared with 92.1 percent of higher-income students.
- **Language Barriers.** Slightly more than half of English language learners (55.1 percent) met standard in reading and writing compared with 88.6 percent of non-ELL students.
- **Disability Status.** Students with at least one documented disability have the lowest met-standard rate (39.9 percent).

**Exhibit 7**  
**Performance Level by WASL Subject**

Subject	Not Met Standard		
	Total	Level 1	Level 2
Reading	4,530 (100%)	960 (22%)	3,570 (78%)
Writing	4,213 (100%)	871 (21%)	3,342 (79%)
Math	21,512 (100%)	8,483 (39%)	13,029 (61%)

Subject	Met Standard		
	Total	Level 3	Level 4
Reading	61,891 (100%)	18,805 (30%)	43,086 (70%)
Writing	62,126 (100%)	30,660 (49%)	31,466 (51%)
Math	44,717 (100%)	30,788 (69%)	13,929 (31%)

**Exhibit 8**  
**WASL Met-Standard Rates by Student Characteristics**  
As of Summer 2007

Student Characteristics	Met-Standard Rates			
	Percentage of Slated		Percentage of Completed	
	Reading, Writing, and Math	Reading and Writing	Reading, Writing, and Math	Reading and Writing
All Students	64.3	87.2	67.8	91.1
Female	62.8	90.0	64.2	92.6
Male	65.7	84.2	67.2	86.9
Asian	73.7	91.9	74.3	93.0
African American	36.2	77.5	37.6	81.3
American Indian	43.9	76.3	46.0	81.0
Hispanic	40.2	75.8	41.1	78.0
White	69.6	90.1	70.7	92.1
Low Income	45.2	77.0	46.8	80.6
Not Low Income	73.5	92.1	74.7	94.2
ELL	25.3	55.1	26.8	58.9
Not ELL	66.1	88.6	67.4	91.2
Disability	16.4	39.9	16.9	46.2
No Disability	67.6	90.9	69.1	92.8

<sup>5</sup> <<http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/series.asp?seriesid=2>>.

Met-standard rates are slightly higher—increasing by between 0.5 and 6 percentage points—when calculated as a percentage of students who completed the WASL as opposed to students who were slated to take the WASL. Incorporating math performance into the calculation reduces met-standard rates substantially, by 18 to 41 percentage points.

Exhibit 9 examines student performance in reading and writing more closely by depicting the percentage of students with various demographic characteristics who have met standard in the following subjects:

- **Both** reading and writing,
- **Either** reading or writing, and
- **Neither** reading nor writing.

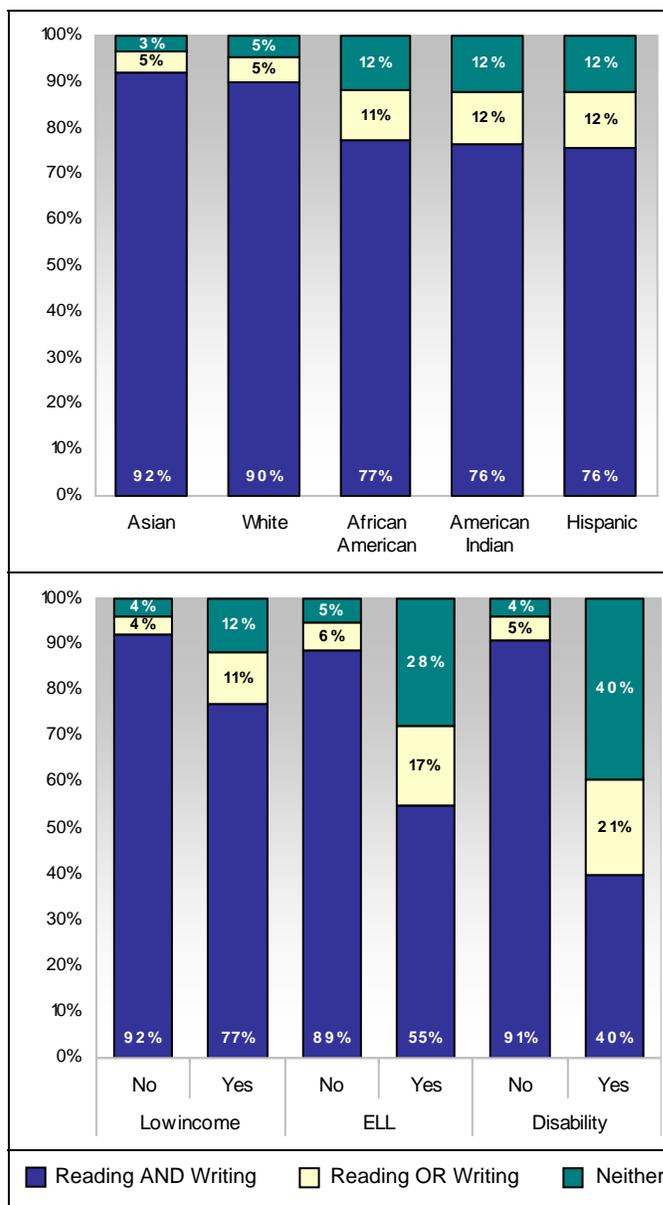
The percentage of students who met standard in both reading and writing has already been considered. Here we focus on students who still need to meet standard in reading, writing, or both in order to satisfy the graduation requirement. All percentages are based on the number of students who are slated to take the WASL.

**Race/Ethnicity.** Twelve percent of African American, American Indian, and Hispanic students have not yet met standard in reading and writing; another 11 to 12 percent of these students have met standard in one or the other subject, but not both. Conversely, 5 percent of Asian and White students have met standard in either reading or writing but not both, while an additional 3 and 5 percent, respectively, have not met standard in either subject.

**Low Income.** Eleven percent of students who are eligible for free/reduced-price meals have met standard in reading or writing but not both, and an additional 12 percent have not met standard in either subject. These results compare with 4 percent of higher-income students who have met standard on one but not the other assessment and another 4 percent who have met standard in neither subject.

**Language Barriers.** Performance in reading and writing is lowest for students who are classified as English language learners. Fifty-five percent of ELL students had met standard by summer 2007, with an additional 17 percent meeting standard in reading or writing but not both. More than one-quarter of ELL students—28 percent—had not met standard in reading or writing by summer 2007.

**Exhibit 9**  
**Percentage of Students Meeting Standard in Reading and Writing by Student Characteristics**  
 As of Summer 2007



**Disabilities.** Forty percent of students with at least one documented disability met standard in both reading and writing compared with 91 percent of their non-disabled peers. Forty percent of students with one or more disabilities had not met standard in either reading or writing as of summer 2007.

**Gender (not shown in Exhibit 9).** Five percent of females and 8 percent of males have not met standard in either reading or writing. An additional 5 and 8 percent of females and males, respectively, have met standard in one subject but not the other.

## CLASS OF 2009 RESULTS

This section examines WASL completion and performance for students in the class of 2009 who were scheduled to take the 10th-grade WASL for the first time in spring 2007. The results include the spring 2007 administration of the WASL as well as the summer 2007 retake. We present information on (1) the number of students in the class of 2009 slated for different assessments, (2) completion rates, and (3) met-standard rates.

### Number of “Slated” Students

Exhibit 10 shows that most students—95.2 percent—in the class of 2009 were scheduled to take the “regular” WASL for all three subjects: reading, writing, and math. An additional 2.7 percent of students were slated to take some combination of the WAAS-Portfolio or WASL-Basic.<sup>6</sup> The remaining 2.1 percent of students were slated to take some combination of the WASL and alternate assessments.

**Exhibit 10**  
**Number of Students Who Were Slated to Take the WASL or WAAS**  
 Class of 2009

Reading	Writing	Math	Number	%
<b>Slated for the “regular” WASL</b>				
WASL	WASL	WASL	71,567	95.2
<b>Slated for alternate assessments (WAAS)</b>				
WAAS	WAAS	WAAS	2,053	2.7
<b>Slated for a combination of the WASL and WAAS</b>				
WAAS	WAAS	WASL	465	0.6
WASL	WASL	WAAS	340	0.5
WASL	WAAS	WASL	238	0.3
WASL	WAAS	WAAS	232	0.3
WAAS	WASL	WAAS	159	0.2
WAAS	WASL	WASL	143	0.2
<b>Total</b>				
Either	Either	Either	75,197	100.0

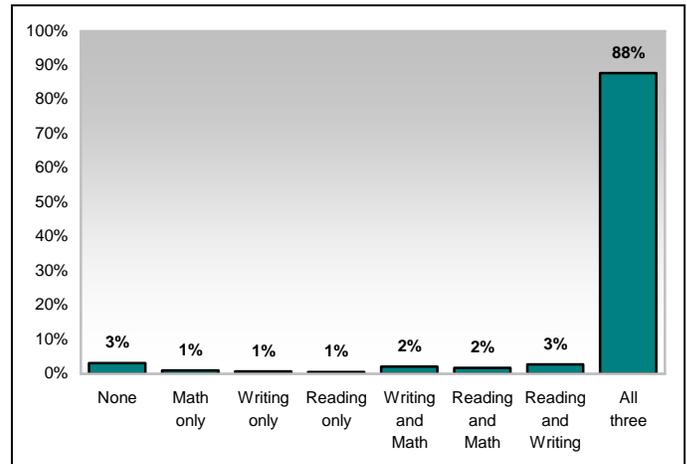
WASL = Washington Assessment of Student Learning.  
 WAAS = Washington Alternate Assessment System.

<sup>6</sup> Due to requirements established under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, the Developmentally Appropriate WASL is no longer administered to 10th graders. Eligible students in the 11th and 12th grades may continue to take the WAAS-DAW to satisfy Washington State’s graduation requirements. The WASL-Basic is administered to students who perform at or near grade level and who are able to take paper-and-pencil tests under routine conditions. It is identical to the “regular” WASL but sets the achievement standard at Level 2 (Basic) rather than Level 3 (Proficient).

## Completion Rates

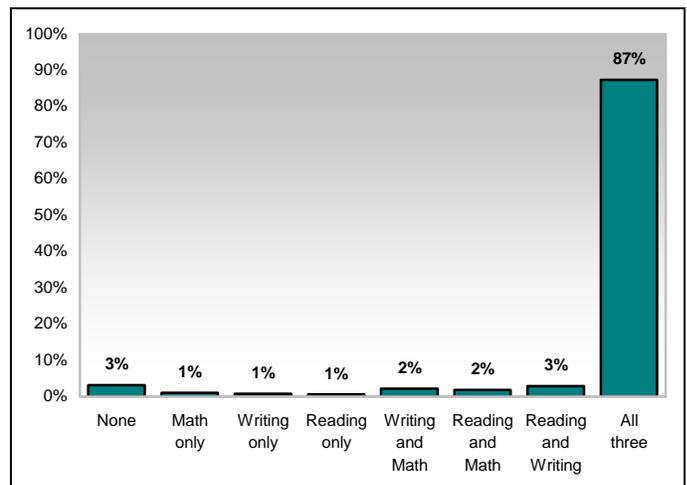
Most students in the class of 2009 who were slated to take the WASL in spring 2007 have done so. As illustrated in Exhibit 11, 88 percent of students completed the reading, writing, and math portions of the WASL in spring or summer 2007, and 3 percent did not complete any of the assessments. Likewise, 87 percent of all students in the class of 2009 completed either a WASL or WAAS in reading, writing, and math (see Exhibit 12).

**Exhibit 11**  
**Percentage of Students Completing the WASL as of Summer 2007**  
 Class of 2009



Based on the number of public school students in the class of 2009 who were enrolled as 10th graders in 2006–07 and who were slated to take the WASL (n=71,567).

**Exhibit 12**  
**Percentage of Students Completing the WASL or WAAS as of Summer 2007**  
 Class of 2009



Based on the number of public school students in the class of 2009 who were enrolled as 10th graders in 2006–07 and who were slated to take either the WASL or the WAAS (n=75,197).

As of summer 2007, 12.2 percent of students in the class of 2009 had not completed all three subject-area WASL assessments (reading, writing, and math) as scheduled.

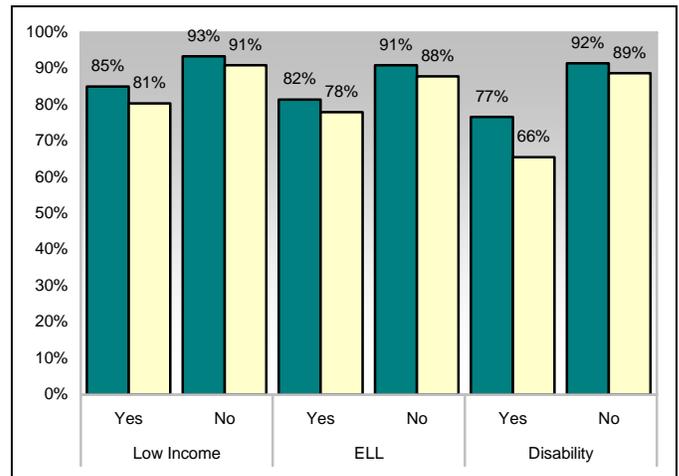
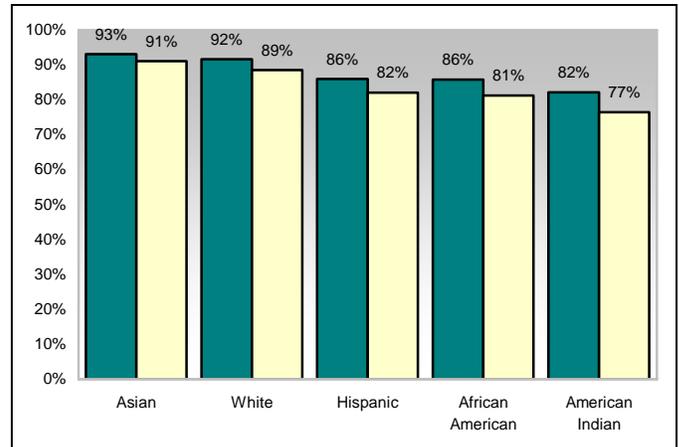
Exhibit 13 reports completion rates by subject area and student characteristics. In every subject, completion rates are lower for “disadvantaged” students—non-Asian minorities, low-income students, English language learners, and students with disabilities—relative to their peers. Moreover, completion rates for all groups tend to be slightly lower in math than in reading and writing.

**Exhibit 13**  
**WASL Completion Rates by Student Characteristics**  
Class of 2009

Student Characteristics	WASL Subjects				
	Reading	Writing	Math	Reading and Writing	Reading, Writing, and Math
All Students	92.9	93.4	92.6	90.6	87.8
Female	93.4	94.0	93.2	91.3	88.2
Male	92.2	92.7	91.9	89.9	86.6
Asian	94.8	95.0	94.5	93.1	91.1
African American	88.9	89.8	89.2	85.8	81.3
American Indian	86.2	87.5	85.0	82.2	76.5
Hispanic	89.3	89.6	88.8	86.0	82.1
White	93.7	94.2	93.4	91.6	88.6
Low Income	88.6	89.5	88.1	85.1	80.5
Not Low Income	95.0	95.4	94.9	93.4	91.0
ELL	85.2	85.1	85.7	81.5	78.0
Not ELL	93.2	93.8	92.9	91.0	87.9
Disability	81.4	81.6	80.6	76.7	65.6
No Disability	93.7	94.2	93.5	91.5	88.8

Exhibit 14 charts completion rates by selected student characteristics for two combinations of subject-area assessments: reading and writing, and reading, writing, and math. Completion rates by race/ethnicity are lowest for American Indian students, followed by African American, Hispanic, White, and Asian students.

**Exhibit 14**  
**Percentage of Students Completing the WASL**  
**by Student Characteristics**  
Class of 2009



■ Reading and Writing      □ Reading, Writing, and Math

Exhibit 14 also displays completion rates by income, English language learner status, and disability status.

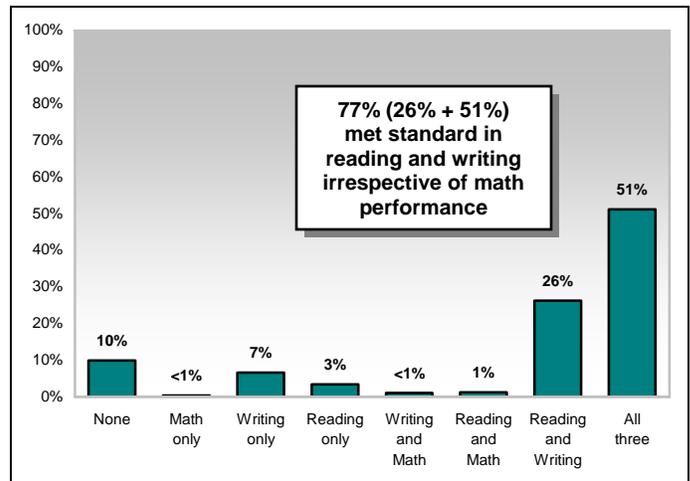
- 81 percent of students who are eligible for free/reduced-price meals completed the reading, writing, and math WASL assessments compared with 91 percent of non-eligible students.
- 78 percent of English language learners completed reading, writing, and math compared with 88 percent of students not receiving bilingual services.
- 66 percent of students with at least one documented disability completed all three subject-area assessments of the WASL, while 89 percent of their non-disabled peers did so.

Completion rates for reading and writing are slightly higher than completion rates in reading, writing, and math combined but are characterized by the same gaps.

### Met-Standard Rates

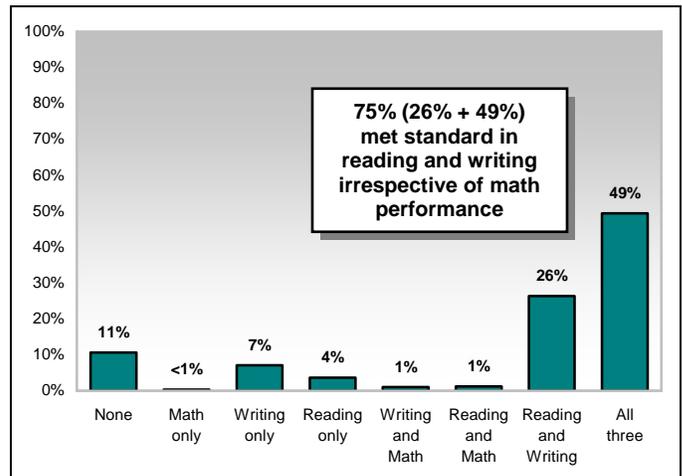
Exhibits 15 and 16 indicate that approximately half of students in the class of 2009 have met standard in reading, writing, and math: 51 percent of students slated for all three WASL assessments met standard in each subject. An additional 26 percent of students met standard in reading and writing but not math. Approximately 10 percent of students did not meet standard in any subject; this percentage includes students who did not complete the WASL as scheduled in spring 2007 or summer 2007. In comparison, 49 percent of all students met standard on either the WASL or WAAS, with an additional 26 percent meeting standard in reading and writing but not math.

**Exhibit 15**  
**Percentage of Students Meeting Standard on the WASL as of Summer 2007**  
 Class of 2009



Note: Based on the number of students in the class of 2009 who were enrolled as 10th graders in 2006–07 and who were slated to take the WASL (n=71,567).

**Exhibit 16**  
**Percentage of Students Meeting Standard on the WASL or WAAS as of Summer 2007**  
 Class of 2009



Note: Based on the number of students in the class of 2009 who were enrolled as 10th graders in 2006–07 and who were slated to take either the WASL or the WAAS (n=75,197).

Exhibit 17 reports met-standard rates for the class of 2009 by various student characteristics. Again, we calculate met-standard rates as the percentage of (1) all students who were slated to take the WASL, and (2) students who have completed the WASL. We report met-standard rates individually for reading, writing, and math, as well as for two combinations of subject-area assessments: reading and writing, and reading, writing, and math.

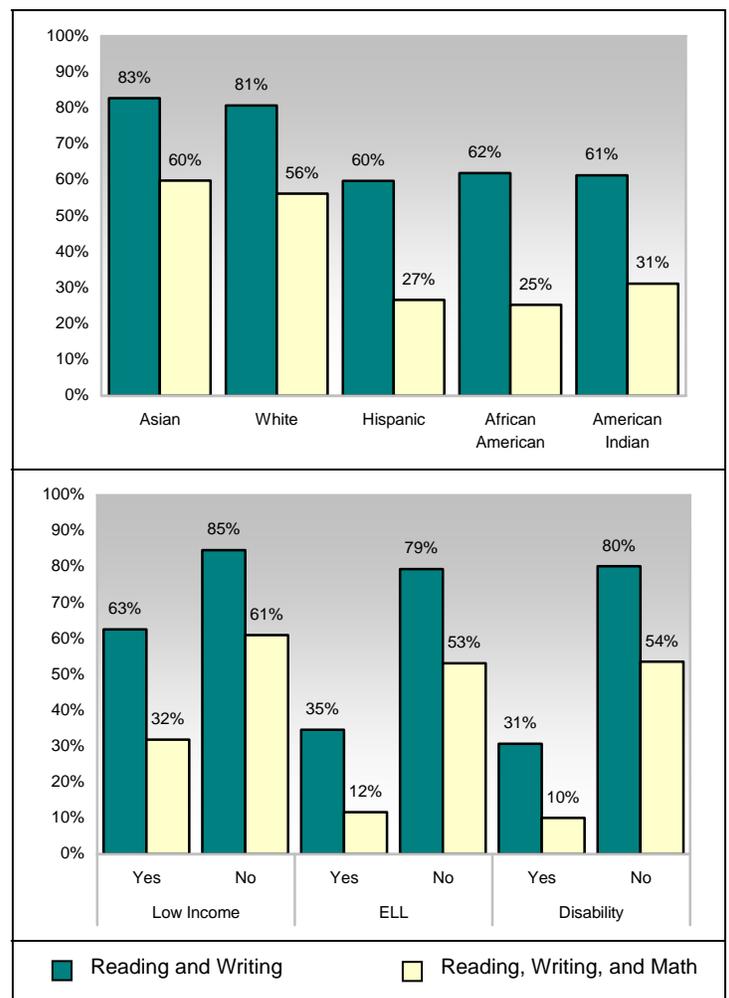
**Exhibit 17**  
**WASL Met-Standard Rates by Student Characteristics**  
 Class of 2009

Student Characteristics	WASL Subjects				
	Reading	Writing	Math	Reading and Writing	Reading, Writing, and Math
<b>Met Standard (Percentage of Slated)</b>					
All Students	81.6	84.7	53.3	77.2	51.2
Female	84.7	88.8	52.0	81.5	50.5
Male	78.4	80.6	54.6	72.8	51.8
Asian	86.5	88.5	62.3	82.7	59.8
African American	67.6	74.8	26.6	61.9	25.3
American Indian	67.7	72.7	33.2	61.3	31.2
Hispanic	66.8	70.1	28.0	59.7	26.7
White	84.6	87.6	58.6	80.7	56.2
Low Income	69.3	73.9	34.2	62.6	31.9
Not Low Income	87.9	90.3	63.2	84.7	61.0
ELL	45.0	46.9	14.7	34.6	11.7
Not ELL	83.4	86.7	55.3	79.4	53.2
Disability	39.0	44.6	12.0	30.7	10.1
No Disability	84.6	87.5	56.3	80.2	53.6
<b>Met Standard (Percentage of Completed)</b>					
All Students	87.8	90.7	57.6	85.2	58.2
Female	90.6	94.4	55.8	89.3	57.1
Male	84.9	86.9	59.3	81.0	59.5
Asian	91.2	93.1	65.9	88.8	65.6
African American	75.9	83.2	29.7	72.2	30.9
American Indian	78.5	83.0	39.0	74.5	40.4
Hispanic	74.7	78.2	31.5	72.2	32.3
White	90.3	92.9	62.7	88.1	63.2
Low Income	78.2	82.5	38.8	73.5	39.3
Not Low Income	92.5	94.7	66.6	90.7	66.9
ELL	52.8	55.1	17.2	42.4	14.9
Not ELL	89.5	92.4	59.5	87.2	60.2
Disability	47.8	54.6	14.8	40.0	14.2
No Disability	90.4	92.9	60.3	87.7	60.4

Because some students did not complete the WASL as scheduled in spring 2007, met-standard rates are higher as a percentage of completers than as a percentage of students who were slated to take the WASL.

Exhibit 18 displays met-standard rates as a percentage of students who were slated to take the WASL for two combinations of subject-area assessments—reading and writing with and without math—by student characteristics.

**Exhibit 18**  
**Percentage of Students Meeting Standard on the WASL**  
 Class of 2009



Note: As a percentage of students slated to take each combination of assessments.

- 83 percent of Asian students who were slated to take the reading and writing portions of the WASL met standard compared with 81 percent of White students. In contrast, 62 percent of African American students and 61 percent of American Indian students met standard in reading and writing. Hispanic students had the lowest met-standard rate (60 percent).
- Met-standard rates decline substantially when performance in math is also considered, but gaps by race/ethnicity persist. Sixty percent of Asian students and 56 percent of White students met standard in reading, writing, and math compared with roughly 25 percent of African American, 27 percent of Hispanic, and 31 percent of American Indian students.
- Low-income students had lower met-standard rates than their higher-income peers. Among students who were eligible for free/reduced-price meal benefits, 63 percent met standard in reading and writing; this compares with 85 percent of non-eligible students. The corresponding met-standard rates for reading, writing, and math are 32 and 61 percent.
- Performance gaps are also large for students who did and did not receive transitional bilingual instruction: 35 percent of English language learners and 79 percent of other students met standard in reading and writing; met-standard rates in reading, writing, and math combined were 12 and 53 percent for ELL and non-ELL students, respectively.
- Differentials in WASL performance are largest for students with and without documented disabilities. Approximately 31 percent of students with at least one disability and who were slated to take the “regular” reading and writing WASL assessments met standard, while 80 percent of their non-disabled peers met standard. When performance in math is also considered, 10 percent of students with one or more disabilities met standard compared with slightly more than half (54 percent) of non-disabled students.

Compared with performance on the WASL in spring 2006, 10th graders who completed the WASL in spring 2007 had slightly higher met-standard rates in reading and math. For most groups of students, met-standard rates in writing improved considerably from 2006 to 2007.

Overall, 84.3 percent of students in the class of 2008 met standard in writing on the spring 2006 WASL;<sup>7</sup> in spring 2007, 90 percent of students in the class of 2009 met standard on the writing WASL. Met-standard rates in writing increased by as many as 13 percentage points for ELL students.

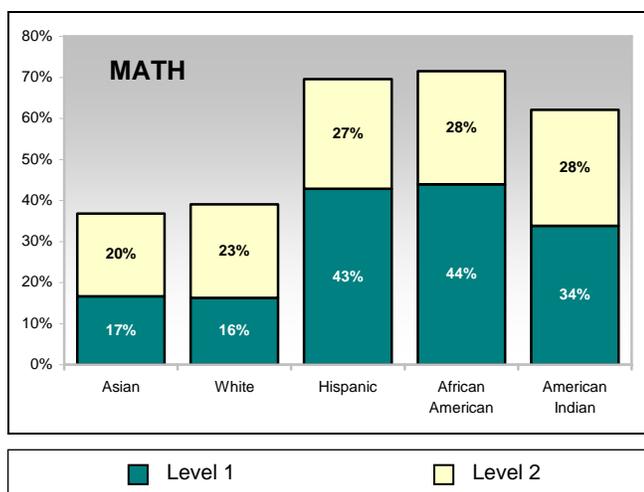
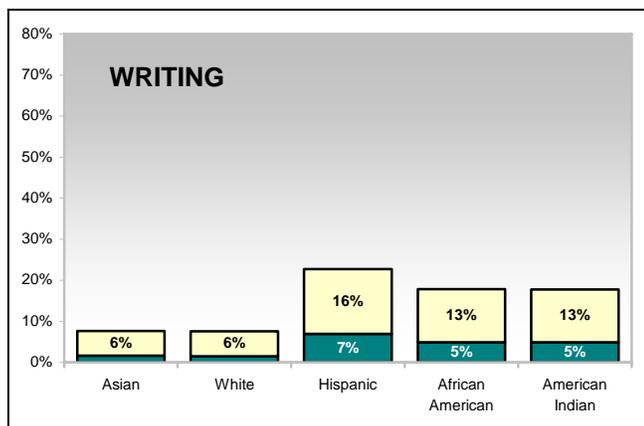
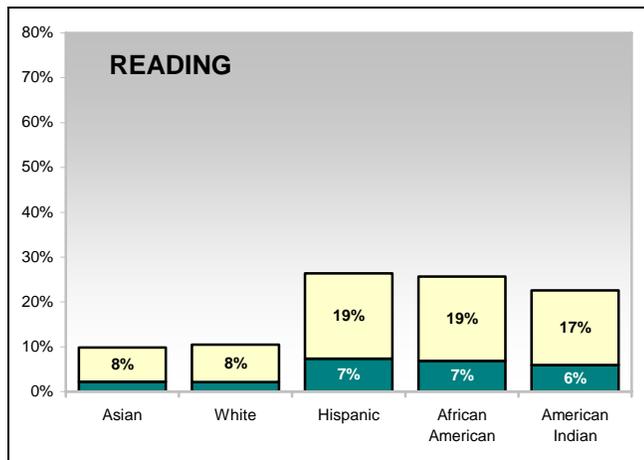
Exhibits 19 and 20 report the level of WASL performance for students who did not meet standard in spring 2007. Level 1 represents “Below Basic” scores and level 2 represents “Basic” scores. Students with a level 3 or 4 score are deemed to have met standard.

**Exhibit 19**  
**Percentage of Students with Level 1 and 2 Scores**  
**by Student Characteristics**  
Class of 2009

Student Characteristics	WASL Level	WASL Subjects		
		Reading	Writing	Math
All Students	Level 1	2.6	2.0	18.5
	Level 2	8.7	6.7	20.7
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	Level 1	2.0	1.3	21.6
	Level 2	8.2	4.7	24.6
Male	Level 1	4.0	3.3	20.3
	Level 2	12.1	10.6	22.2
<b>Income</b>				
Low Income	Level 1	6.0	4.9	35.1
	Level 2	16.9	13.5	27.4
Not Low Income	Level 1	1.5	1.0	13.9
	Level 2	6.7	4.7	21.4
<b>Language</b>				
ELL	Level 1	16.8	17.4	62.8
	Level 2	31.2	28.2	20.6
Not ELL	Level 1	2.3	1.6	18.9
	Level 2	9.1	6.6	23.6
<b>Disability</b>				
Disability	Level 1	20.2	16.4	67.3
	Level 2	33.1	29.9	18.6
No Disability	Level 1	1.9	1.4	17.9
	Level 2	8.6	6.2	23.7

<sup>7</sup> R. Barnoski & W. Cole. (2007). *Tenth-grade WASL performance in spring 2006: How individual student characteristics are associated with performance*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Document No. 07-02-2201.

**Exhibit 20**  
**Level of Performance Among Students Who Did Not Meet Standard on the WASL, by Race/Ethnicity**  
 Class of 2009



The results show that, with the exception of math performance among “disadvantaged” students (low-income students, English language learners, students with a disability, and non-Asian minorities), a higher percentage had level 2 scores than level 1 scores; however, math scores were distributed more evenly between levels 1 and 2 compared with reading or writing scores. This pattern indicates that more students were “far misses” in math than in reading or writing.

As mentioned, for four groups—non-Asian minorities, low-income students, English language learners, and students with at least one disability—a higher percentage of students had level 1 scores than level 2 scores in math. For example, 18.6 percent of students with at least one documented disability received a level 2 score in math compared with 67.3 percent of disabled students with a level 1 math score.

**CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE UPDATED STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE WASL**

Based on adjustments the Legislature made to Washington’s high school assessment system during the 2007 session, **we estimate that between 85 and 87 percent of students in the class of 2008 who were enrolled as 11th graders last year have satisfied the WASL graduation requirement** (i.e., met standard in reading and writing as well as completed the math assessment).

- As of summer 2007, **approximately 64 percent of students had satisfied the requirements needed to graduate with a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA)** by meeting standard in reading, writing, and math.
- An additional **23 percent of students were on track to graduate without a CAA**, either because they met standard in reading and writing but not math, or because they met standard using one or more alternate assessments for students in special education. Students in special education who meet standard on an alternate assessment rather than on the “regular” WASL earn a Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA).

We reiterate that these results slightly underestimate the percentage of students who have satisfied the WASL graduation requirement because they do not include students who met standard using an approved alternative assessment (i.e., a Collection of Evidence (COE); SAT, ACT, or AP scores; or the subject-area GPA cohort option). Alternative assessments add 0.1 percent to the overall WASL met-standard rate.<sup>8</sup>

Conversely, the results may overestimate the percentage of students who are eligible to graduate because they do not include information as to whether other high school graduation requirements—the culminating project, a high school and beyond plan, and credit requirements—have been met.

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<sup>8</sup> W. Cole & A. Pennucci. (2007). *Washington's high school assessment system: A review of student performance on the WASL and alternative assessment options*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Document No. 07-12-2202.

Students in the class of 2009 were scheduled to take the WASL for the first time in spring 2007. **Roughly three-quarters (77.2 percent) of students in the class of 2009 satisfied the WASL graduation requirement** after only one attempt at taking the WASL. A smaller proportion of students—51.2 percent—satisfied the requirements for a CAA by meeting standard in reading, writing, and math.

Nevertheless, for students in both the classes of 2008 and 2009, **completion and met-standard rates continue to vary by student characteristics**. Met-standard rates in particular are lower for African American, American Indian, and Hispanic students relative to Asian and White students; for low-income students relative to their higher-income peers; for English language learners relative to English-speaking students; and for students with one or more disabilities relative to non-disabled students.





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