

## ESTIMATE OF STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR WASL-RELATED HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION PROGRAMS IN WASHINGTON STATE

The 2007 Washington State Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) to “develop an estimate of the number of students statewide likely to participate in” high school completion programs authorized by 2007 legislation.<sup>1</sup> Based on the most recent data available, up to **424** students in the class of 2008 would be eligible statewide.

This report briefly reviews the methods used to develop this estimate.

### Background: Pilot High School Completion Programs

In Washington, 29 public community and technical colleges (CTCs) operate high school completion programs.<sup>2</sup> In these programs, students under age 21 who did not complete high school in the K–12 system can take classes that count toward state high school diploma requirements. These students pay tuition on a per-credit basis; students under age 19 pay reduced tuition.<sup>3</sup>

The 2007 Legislature expanded high school completion opportunities by creating pilot programs at two community and technical colleges. The pilot programs enroll “students under the age of twenty-one who have completed all state and local high school graduation requirements” except for meeting standard on the reading and writing sections of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL).<sup>4</sup> The pilot programs provide courses to prepare students to pass the WASL. They are

funded using a combination of basic education, learning assistance program, student achievement, and transition bilingual instruction program dollars.<sup>5</sup>

The two pilot programs will be provided by Renton Technical College and Bates Technical College; the programs will enroll students starting in September 2008.<sup>6</sup>

### Program Eligibility Criteria

Under the authorizing legislation, eligible students must first fulfill course credit and other state high school graduation requirements:

*“‘eligible student’ means a student who has completed all state and local high school graduation requirements except the certificate of academic achievement under RCW 28A.655.061 or the certificate of individual achievement under RCW 28A.155.045.”<sup>7</sup>*

The legislation further restricts eligibility to a student who:

*“is less than age twenty-one as of September 1st of the academic year the student enrolls at a community and technical college ... and who meets the following criteria: (a) Receives a level 2 (basic) score on the reading and writing content areas of the high school Washington assessment of student learning; (b) Has not successfully met state standards on a retake of the assessment or an alternative assessment; (c) Has participated in assessment remediation; and (d) Receives a recommendation to enroll in courses or a program of study made available*

<sup>1</sup> HB 1051, Chapter 355, Section 8(2), Laws of 2007

<sup>2</sup> A. Pennucci & H. Lidman. (2007). *Immigrant Secondary Students in Washington State: Population Trends and High School Diploma Programs*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy. Document No. 07-01-2204.

<sup>3</sup> RCW 28B.15.520(a)

<sup>4</sup> HB 1051, Section 3(1)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Section 4(3)

<sup>6</sup> Personal communication with State Board for Community and Technical College staff.

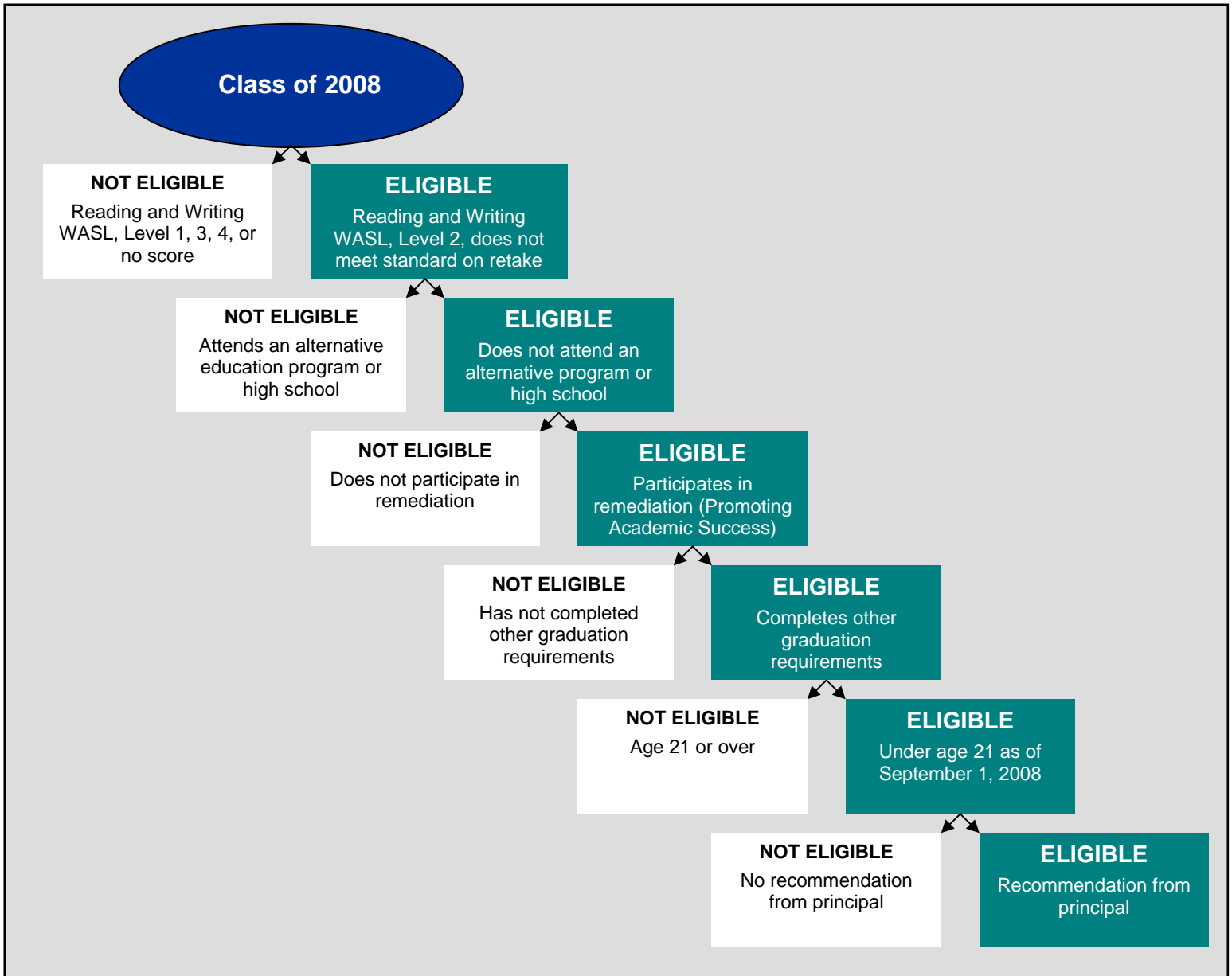
<sup>7</sup> HB 1051, Section 4(1)

under section 3 of this act from his or her high school principal.”<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, estimates of eligible students must “take into account programs and alternatives offered for fifth-year seniors by school districts and educational service districts.”<sup>9</sup>

Exhibit 1 illustrates these eligibility criteria for the class of 2008, the first students who may participate in WASL-related high school completion programs.

**Exhibit 1**  
**Student Eligibility Criteria for WASL-Related High School Completion Programs, 2008**



<sup>8</sup> Ibid., emphasis added

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., Section 8(2)

## Estimate of Eligible Students Statewide

As noted, the Legislature directed the Institute to develop an estimate of eligible students if these WASL-related high school completion programs were available statewide. To develop this estimate, we use Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction enrollment and WASL data covering the class of 2008 updated through August 2007. At this point, students in the class of 2008 have had four chances to take and retake the reading and writing WASL exams: spring 2006, August 2006, spring 2007, and August 2007.

The estimate begins with 72,045 students in the class of 2008 who were in 11th grade during the 2006–07 school year. (12th-grade enrollment data for this class of students were not available when this report was written). Of these 11th graders, 1,086 students had scored at Level 2 on both the reading and writing WASL. Of these 1,086 Level 2 students, 462 had participated in Promoting Academic Success (PAS), the statewide assessment remediation program. Thirty-seven of these PAS participants attended alternative high schools or programs. Only one of these PAS participants will turn twenty-one before September 1, 2008. The remainder (462 minus 37 minus 1) equals **424 students**. The appendix summarizes the characteristics of these eligible students.

This estimate reflects a relatively small number of students statewide because few students score at precisely a Level 2 on both the reading and writing WASL, are on track to graduate, and have participated in PAS.

Given the program and estimate assumptions, 0.6 percent of public high school students statewide would be eligible for WASL-related high school completion programs.

## Assumptions Used to Develop the Estimate.

Washington does not collect statewide data on whether students have met other graduation requirements (such as credits, culminating projects, and high school and beyond plans) or whether students receive recommendations from principals to participate in WASL-related high school completion programs. The estimate of eligible students cannot take these variables into account, so 424 should be considered an upper-bound estimate. Also, during the course of the 2007–08 school year, additional students may meet standard on the WASL, thereby reducing the number of eligible students, or score a Level 2 on the reading and writing WASL, thereby increasing the number of eligible students.

If the estimate includes students who scored at a Level 2 on the reading or writing WASL (rather than both), the number of eligible students statewide would increase to 856. If the estimate includes students who scored a Level 1 on the reading and writing WASL, an additional 156 students would be eligible. If the estimate includes students who have not yet completed the reading and writing WASL exams, approximately 968 more students would be eligible.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> This estimate of potentially eligible students assumes that students who have not yet taken the WASL are similar to those who have scored a Level 1 or Level 2 on the reading or writing exams. This assumption is based on previous Institute research which found that "non-completers" are similar in characteristics to students who take, but do not meet standard on, the WASL. 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.

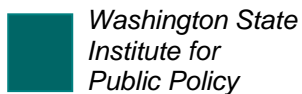
## Appendix

### Characteristics of Eligible Students for WASL-Related High School Completion Programs Eligibility Estimate as of August 2007

	Number	Percent
Male	297	70.0%
Female	127	30.0%
Disability	153	36.1%
No disability	271	63.9%
African-American	37	8.7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	33	7.8%
American Indian	16	3.8%
Hispanic	94	22.2%
White	242	57.1%
English language learner	91	78.5%
English speaker	333	21.5%
Free/reduced price meal eligible	322	75.9%
Free/reduced price meal not eligible	102	24.1%

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