

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF FOSTER CHILDREN: 2006 RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

Children in foster care represent one of the most academically at-risk populations in the education system. Compared with their peers who have not been in foster care, foster youth are more likely to be held back a grade and less likely to stay in the same school for an extended period. Foster youth are also placed in special education classes at a higher rate than other students, often for reasons related to a learning, emotional, or behavioral disability. Past histories of abuse or neglect, multiple placements, and school instability all contribute to a significant deficit in test achievement scores among foster youth.

A 2001 report by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) reported the gap in standardized test scores between Washington State foster youth and non-foster youth.¹ On average, foster youth were found to score 15 to 20 percent below non-foster youth on statewide achievement tests. The analysis conducted in 2001 was based on statewide, norm-referenced assessment tests. In 2005, however, the state no longer required school districts to administer these tests, shifting instead to the criterion-based Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL).²

Since publication of the 2001 report, changes in Washington's child welfare system have placed a renewed emphasis on providing educational support and services for youth in foster care. Some of these changes are the result of a legal settlement that was reached between the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and plaintiffs representing foster youth.³

¹ M. Burley & M. Halpern. (2001). *Educational attainment of foster youth: Achievement and graduation outcomes for children in state care*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Document No. 01-11-3901.

² Norm-referenced tests compare an individual's performance to the performances of a "norm group." Criterion-based tests determine whether each student has achieved specific skills.

³ An expert panel (the Braam Oversight Panel) is overseeing compliance with the settlement.

Summary

This report updates a 2001 Institute study on the educational attainment of foster youth in Washington State. The number and characteristics of foster youth who met standard on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) tests in grades 4, 7, and 10 are compared with those of non-foster youth. Foster youth represent about 1 percent of the student population.

Key findings include:

- Met-standard rates on the 2006 WASL were twice as high for non-foster youth compared with foster youth. While 54 percent of 10th-grade non-foster youth met standard in all three WASL content areas, 27 percent of foster youth did so.
- Over 25 percent of 10th-grade foster youth in this study had a documented disability or were receiving special education services (compared with 8 percent of non-foster youth). Consequently, a higher percentage (15 percent) of foster youth took "alternative" WASL assessments compared with other youth (4 percent).
- Foster youth were more likely than non-foster youth to have characteristics associated with not meeting WASL standards. For example, 73 percent of 10th-grade foster youth were in poverty, 17 percent were behind a grade level, and 22 percent had been in the same district one year or less.
- Since the 2001 Institute report was based on national standardized tests (ITBS) and the 2008 report examines Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) scores, assessment outcomes cannot be directly compared (see appendix for detail).

One of the action steps incorporated into the agreement calls for the Children’s Administration (CA) of DSHS to replicate the 2001 Institute study for FY 2005 and include information on Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) test scores for 4th, 7th, and 10th grades.⁴ Since the assessment data used in the 2001 analysis are no longer available, it was not possible to replicate the earlier study.

This study does, however, focus on WASL results for foster students. The WASL is a critical assessment test for high school students in Washington State. Beginning with the class of 2008, students must meet state reading and writing standards on the high school WASL in order to graduate. In addition, students must either meet the WASL standard in mathematics or earn sufficient math credits—while continuing to take the math WASL each year—in order to graduate.

This report builds on previous work by the Institute analyzing the educational attainment of foster youth. In addition to comparing WASL results for foster and non-foster youth, we:

- Analyze factors that influence the WASL test scores of foster youth.
- Describe the background of youth in foster care and analyze how these characteristics are related to their educational status.
- Review relevant research findings.
- Highlight recent federal and state legislation related to educational opportunities for foster youth.

Children’s Administration has contracted with the Institute to complete the analysis directed by the Braam Oversight Panel. In 2006, CA began several initiatives aimed at improving educational achievement of foster youth. This report will set a baseline for monitoring educational progress of foster youth in coming years. A timeline of analyses that are currently planned is included at the end of this report (see page 15).

SECTION I: WASHINGTON FINDINGS

Across all three subject areas (reading, writing, and math), 85 percent of 10th-grade youth in foster care took the unmodified, or “standard” WASL, as opposed to 96 percent of all other students. This difference is attributed to an over-representation of foster youth in special education programs. Before discussing WASL test results for foster youth, it is important to discuss the alternative test options. Students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) may satisfy WASL requirements by completing:

- The “unmodified” or **standard WASL** administered to other students in the same grade.
- A “**modified**” **WASL** that is given to IEP students who perform at or near grade level and are able to complete paper and pencil tests. The modified WASL is identical to the standard WASL, but students who qualify for this option are required to meet a Level 2 (as opposed to Level 3) standard to pass the exam.
- The **Washington Alternate Assessment System (WAAS)** portfolio for students with sufficient cognitive disabilities who are unable to complete paper and pencil tests. These students typically submit samples of their work for review.
- The **Developmentally Appropriate WASL**, which can be taken by students who perform substantially below grade level. These students take each content area of the WASL that most closely matches their instructional level.

Among all students eligible to take the WASL during the 2005–06 school year, we analyzed the distribution of test types given in the 4th, 7th, and 10th grades. As Exhibit 1 shows, a significantly lower percentage of foster youth take the unmodified WASL. Students who complete the unmodified WASL are eligible for a Certificate of Academic Achievement, whereas students who complete an alternative assessment can earn a Certificate of Individual Achievement. Both certificates qualify a student to earn a regular high school diploma.⁵

⁴ See <http://www.braampanel.org> for more information.

⁵ As of December 2006, the Developmentally Appropriate WASL is no longer available as an assessment for 10th graders but may still be taken by 11th and 12th graders.

Exhibit 1
Students Slated to Take the WASL, 2005–06 School Year

	Grade 4		Grade 7		Grade 10	
	Non-Foster	Foster	Non-Foster	Foster	Non-Foster	Foster
Unmodified WASL	70,899 (96.5%)	1,022 (88.9%)	75,055 (96.0%)	1,158 (86.0%)	76,875 (95.8%)	1,084 (85.0%)
Alternative Assessments for Special Populations	2,543 (3.5%)	128 (11.1%)	3,116 (4.0%)	189 (14.0%)	3,402 (4.2%)	192 (15.0%)
Total	73,442	1,150	78,171	1,347	80,277	1,276

Test Completers. Not all students slated to take the WASL each spring actually complete each assessment area. During the 2005–06 school year, 81,553 10th graders were slated to take the WASL or an alternative assessment; 83 percent of this group completed all three subject areas. Reasons for students not completing the tests include absences (excused or unexcused), exemptions (medical or limited English), and refusals. About 90 percent of 4th- and 7th-grade foster youth completed the WASL (compared with about 96 percent of non-foster youth in these grades).

Among 10th graders, 61 percent of foster youth completed all three WASL content areas (compared with 84 percent of other students). Previous work by the Institute found the characteristics of non-completers closely resemble those of students who did not meet standard on the WASL.⁶

Unless otherwise noted, all results presented in the remainder of this report are based on students who completed an unmodified WASL test during the 2005–06 school year.

Exhibit 2
Percentage of Eligible Students Completing All Content Areas of the 2005–06 WASL

	Grade 4	Grade 7	Grade 10
Non-Foster Students	70,504 (96%)	74,631 (95%)	67,202 (84%)
Foster Students	1,042 (91%)	1,192 (88%)	773 (61%)

⁶ 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.

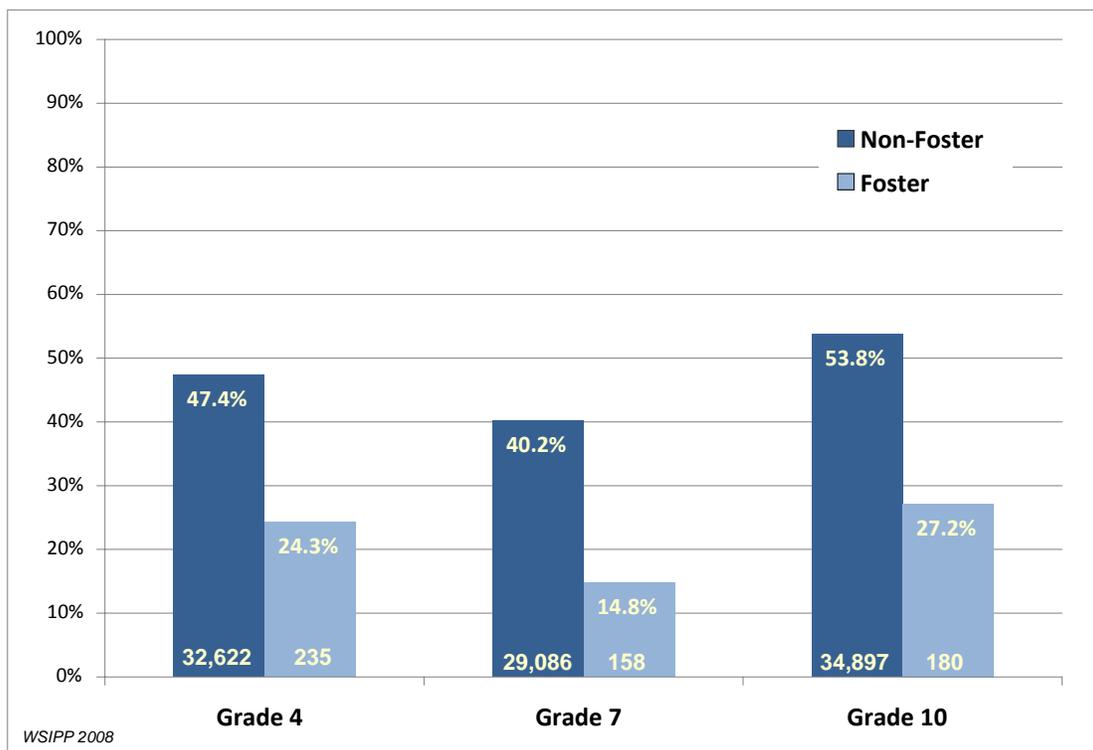
Met WASL Standards. Students taking the WASL in Washington State are assessed by whether or not they “meet the standard” in each subject area. According to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), meeting standard “reflects what a hard-working, well-taught student should know and be able to do to demonstrate mastery of the state’s Essential Learning Requirements.”⁷ Students receive scores corresponding to four different levels: Below Basic (level one), Basic (level two), Proficient (level three), and Advanced (level four). To pass, or meet standard in, each content area, students must receive a level three or level four.

Exhibit 3 displays the percentage of students who met standard in all three content areas (reading, writing, and math). Among 10th graders with a history of foster care placements (three months or longer), 27 percent met WASL standard in reading, writing, and math. Twice as many non-foster youth met standard *in all three subject areas* (54 percent).

Differences between foster and non-foster youth were similar for 4th and 7th graders. Forty percent of non-foster youth met all standards in 7th grade, compared with 15 percent of foster youth; 47 percent of 4th graders met standard in all three areas, compared with 24 percent of youth who had been in foster care.

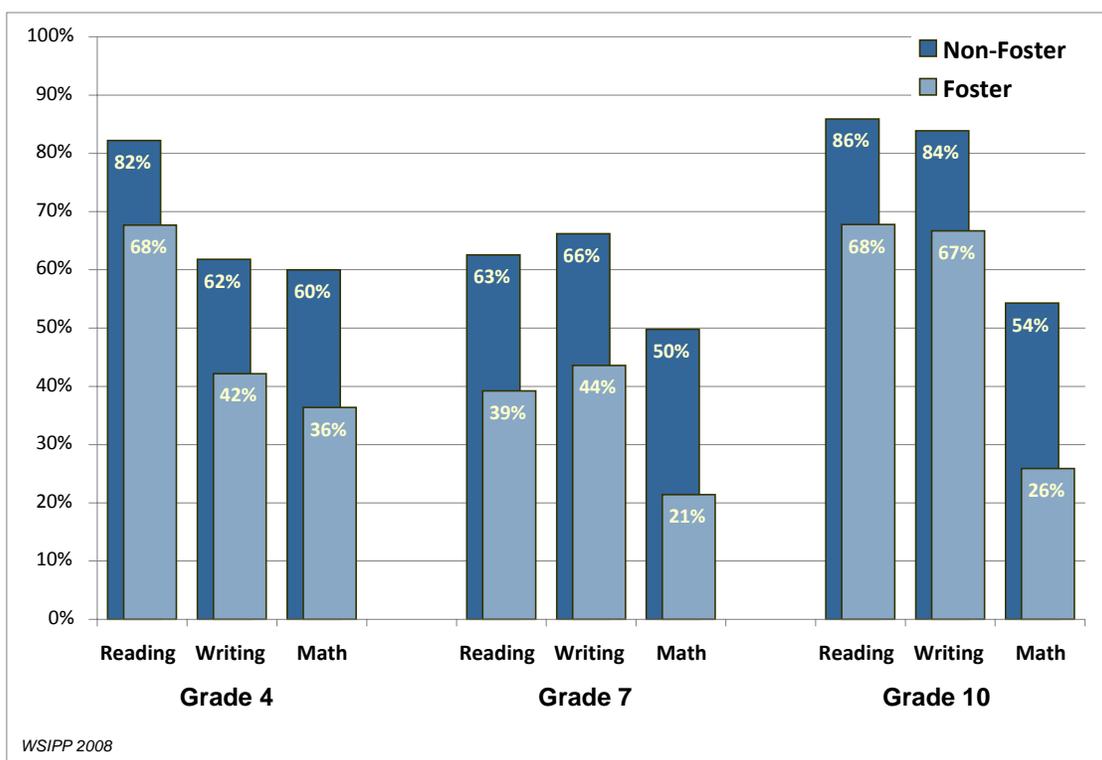
Lower overall met-standard rates (for foster and non-foster youth) are mainly attributed to a large percentage of students who did not meet standard on the math portion of the WASL. When analyzing all three content areas, a smaller percentage of foster youth met standard in reading, writing, and math. The gap between foster and non-foster youth on the math portion of the WASL, however, is significantly wider than for other subject areas. Almost 30 percent fewer foster youth met standard on the math portion of the WASL. Exhibit 4 details met-standard rates for both groups in reading, writing, and math.

Exhibit 3
Percentage of Students Meeting Standard in All Content Areas of the 2005–06 WASL



⁷ www.k12.wa.us/assessment/TestAdministration/pubdocs/PerformanceLevel_CutScores_NewStds.pdf

Exhibit 4
Percentage of Students Meeting Standard by
Subject Area on the 2005–06 WASL



As Exhibit 4 shows, between 14 and 29 percent fewer foster youth met WASL standards across all grades and subject areas. This difference only includes students who completed the WASL. It should also be noted that a smaller share of foster youth completed the WASL when compared with other students. The next section explores factors related to meeting standard on the WASL and highlights differences between foster and non-foster youth.

Foster youth typically had a higher rate of these characteristics associated with poor WASL performance. Exhibit 5 displays the characteristics of 10th-grade foster and non-foster youth completing the WASL during the 2005–06 school year. Results for 4th and 7th graders are presented in the appendix.

Student Characteristics Associated With WASL Performance. Previous work completed by the Institute found that 10th graders with low met-standard rates typically had one or more of the following characteristics: minority status (African American, American Indian, or Hispanic), in poverty, recorded disability, grade point average below 2.5, poor school attendance, enrollment in special education, behind grade level, and parents with less than a high school education.⁸

⁸ R. Barnoski & W. Cole. (2007). *Tenth-grade WASL in spring 2006: How individual student characteristics are associated with performance*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Document No. 07-02-2201.

Exhibit 5
Characteristics of 10th Graders Completing the 2005–06 WASL

Category of Student	Percentage of 10th Graders		Met Standard in All Three Areas	
	Non-Foster	Foster	Non-Foster	Foster
All Students	99%	1%	53.8%	27.2%
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2.1%	10.0%	35.4%	20.3%
Asian American	8.5%	2.5%	60.8%	50.0%
African American (Not of Hispanic Origin)	4.2%	14.8%	26.4%	17.0%
Hispanic/Latino	9.6%	8.3%	27.6%	28.3%
Caucasian (Not of Hispanic Origin)	75.5%	64.4%	58.6%	30.5%
Gender				
Female	50.5%	55.2%	53.1%	28.2%
Male	49.5%	44.8%	54.5%	26.0%
Poverty Status				
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	25.7%	72.8%	33.0%	24.0%
School Status				
Behind Grade Level	10.7%	17.4%	37.1%	15.7%
Time in Same District				
One Year or Less	12.5%	22.5%	44.4%	20.4%
One to Two Years	17.6%	19.9%	52.6%	22.3%
Longer Than Two Years	70.0%	57.6%	55.8%	31.4%

Exhibit 5 shows that across a number of indicators, foster youth were more likely to have characteristics associated with lower met-standard rates on all three content areas of the WASL. In addition, foster youth with these traits typically scored lower than non-foster youth with the same characteristics. Compared with all other youth, nearly three times as many 10th-grade foster youth were eligible for free and reduced price lunches (26 versus 73 percent). Twenty-four percent of foster youth eligible for free and reduced price lunches met standard in all three WASL areas, compared with 33 percent of non-foster youth in this category.

Seventeen percent of 10th-grade foster youth were not in an age-appropriate grade, compared with 11 percent of other students. Foster youth who were behind a grade level had met-standard rates of 16 percent, compared with 37 percent of non-foster youth who were behind a grade level.

Finally, school mobility variables (such as number of school changes) were not available for this analysis. The students' date of enrollment in the district, however, provides a measure of longevity within the same school district. Seventy percent of non-foster youth were in the same school district for more than two years, while 58 percent of foster youth shared this characteristic. Increased time in the same district was associated with higher met-standard rates. Twenty-three percent of 10th-grade foster youth were in the same district for less than one year. Of these students, 20 percent met standard in all three WASL content areas.

Special Education and Disability Status.

The results presented in Exhibit 5 include students who completed all three content areas of the unmodified WASL. As noted previously, some students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are eligible to take modified or developmentally appropriate WASL assessments. Exhibit 6 shows the breakdown of disability and special education status for all 10th-grade students who completed the WASL and alternative assessments for special populations.

Over one-quarter of all 10th-grade foster youth in this study had a documented disability or were receiving special education services. This is about three times the rate of non-foster youth in the 10th grade. Twelve percent of foster youth had a specific learning disability, and 7 percent had a documented health disability. Even when considering alternative assessments, met-standard rates for students with a disability were very low.

Met-Standard Rates in Reading—Student Characteristics.

The percentage of students who met standard in all three WASL content areas is heavily influenced by math scores—far fewer students (foster and non-foster) met standard in math compared with other subjects. Overall met-standard rates for reading (a requirement for high school graduation) were higher. To illustrate differences in assessment results for a single subject, Exhibit 7 presents characteristics of students who passed the 10th-grade WASL in reading.

Although more students met standard in reading, the disparity in pass rates between foster and non-foster students is similar to the results presented in Exhibits 5 and 6.

**Exhibit 6
Characteristics of 10th Graders Completing the 2005–06 WASL
and Alternative WASL Assessments for Special Populations**

Category of Student	Percentage of 10th Graders		Met Standard in All Three Areas	
	Non-Foster	Foster	Non-Foster	Foster
All Students	98.9%	1.1%	52.3%	24.1%
Disability Status				
No Disability	91.6%	72.6%	55.9%	31.6%
Emotional/Behavioral Disability	0.3%	4.3%	13.5%	3.0%
Health Disability	1.9%	7.4%	13.7%	3.5%
Specific Learning Disability	4.7%	11.5%	9.2%	2.2%
Other Disability	1.4%	4.3%	25.7%	12.1%
Special Education Status				
Received Special Education Services	7.8%	26.3%	10.9%	3.0%

Exhibit 7
Characteristics of 10th Graders
Completing the 2005–06 Reading WASL

Category of Student	Percentage of 10th Graders		Met Standard in Reading	
	Non-Foster	Foster	Non-Foster	Foster
All Students	98.8%	1.2%	85.9%	67.8%
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2.3%	10.1%	75.7%	63.8%
Asian American	8.3%	2.1%	87.2%	76.5%
African American (Not of Hispanic Origin)	4.4%	15.3%	73.3%	57.9%
Hispanic/Latino	9.9%	8.5%	67.6%	59.7%
Caucasian (Not of Hispanic Origin)	75.1%	64.0%	89.5%	71.9%
Gender				
Female	50.2%	53.9%	88.2%	72.5%
Male	49.8%	46.1%	83.5%	62.4%
Poverty Status				
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	26.7%	71.9%	73.0%	67.3%
School Status				
Behind Grade Level	11.3%	19.0%	72.3%	53.2%
Time in Same District				
One Year or Less	13.2%	25.4%	80.2%	60.4%
One to Two Years	17.6%	19.8%	83.6%	62.6%
Longer Than Two Years	69.2%	54.9%	87.6%	72.9%
Disability Status				
No Disability	90.9%	71.1%	88.5%	76.5%
Emotional/Behavioral Disability	0.4%	5.0%	42.8%	40.4%
Health Disability	2.1%	7.6%	49.7%	40.3%
Specific Learning Disability	5.0%	11.5%	44.4%	30.3%
Other Disability	1.6%	4.9%	53.2%	43.5%
Special Education Status				
Special Education Services	8.3%	27.3%	44.9%	35.1%

Note: Disability and special education results include students taking alternative assessments.

WASL Results—Multivariate Analysis.

The demographic characteristics of foster youth demonstrate that a large percentage have many risk factors associated with poor WASL performance. It is important to isolate the experiences of these foster youth from the other risk factors they may face. That is, if we analyzed test results for a subgroup of non-foster youth with characteristics similar to foster youth, would we expect both groups to have similar achievement levels?

To answer this question, we constructed a multivariate statistical model that assessed the likelihood that foster youth would meet standard on the WASL test, after accounting for other student characteristics. Exhibit 8 presents the results from this model. As this table shows, compared with other students, youth in foster care have a:

- **35 percent decreased likelihood** of meeting standard in all three WASL content areas in **Grade 4**.

- **46 percent decreased likelihood** of meeting standard in all three WASL content areas in **Grade 7**.
- **38 percent decreased likelihood** of meeting standard in all three WASL content areas in **Grade 10**.

Many foster youth have other factors that place them at an *even higher risk* of not passing the WASL. Among all 10th-grade students, for example, those who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch are 56 percent less likely and students who are behind a grade level are 47 percent less likely to meet standard in all three areas. Tenth-grade students who have been in the same district for one year or less are 35 percent less likely to meet WASL standards, compared with those who have been in the same district for more than two years. Exhibit 8 displays the relative weight of these factors related to meeting standards on the WASL.

Exhibit 8
Statistical Analysis—Percentage Increase (or Decrease) in Likelihood of Meeting 2005–06 WASL Standards

	Grade 4	Grade 7	Grade 10
Foster Youth (three months or more)	(0.35)	(0.46)	(0.38)
Female	0.42	0.38	(0.15)
African American	(0.53)	(0.57)	(0.67)
Asian American	0.53	0.52	0.34
Hispanic/Latino	(0.36)	(0.46)	(0.51)
Native American	(0.49)	(0.55)	(0.52)
Same District: One Year or Less	(0.24)	(0.34)	(0.35)
Same District: One to Two Years	(0.19)	(0.10)	(0.06)
Special Education Services	(0.26)	(0.64)	(0.68)
Free and Reduced Price Lunch Eligibility	(0.56)	(0.59)	(0.56)
Behind One Grade in School	(0.33)	(0.45)	(0.47)
Emotional/Behavioral Disability	(0.80)	(0.72)	(0.64)
Health Related Disability	(0.87)	(0.81)	(0.66)
Specific Learning Disability	(0.90)	(0.91)	(0.83)
Other Disability	(0.36)	(0.20)	(0.22)
Learning Assistance Program	(0.74)	(0.88)	(0.79)
English Not Primary Language	(0.37)	(0.40)	(0.41)
AUC	0.729	0.737	0.701

Notes: Italicized estimates are not significant at the 0.05 level. All other parameter estimates and test statistics are significant at 0.01 level or higher. Race estimates are relative to Caucasian, Same District estimates are relative to more than two years in the district, Disability estimates are relative to no disability.

Foster Care Background. About 30 percent of youth who had ever been in foster care (for three months or longer) were in an active foster care placement at the time they completed the WASL. Older students who are currently in foster care pass the WASL at a lower rate compared with other students their age with a previous foster care placement. Exhibit 9 shows the met-standard rates for these groups of foster students.

Exhibit 9

Percentage of Foster Youth Meeting Standard in All Three Content Areas, 2005–06

	Grade 4	Grade 7	Grade 10
Met Standard— In Foster Care at Time of WASL	22.8%	10.5%	21.4%
Met Standard— In Foster Care Prior to 2006	25.0%	16.7%	29.9%
Difference	2.2%	6.2%	8.5%

As Exhibit 10 demonstrates, compared with current foster youth, youth who have found a permanent placement have higher met-standard rates in all three WASL subject areas.

Exhibit 10

**Percentage of Foster Youth Meeting Standard in All Three Content Areas—
By Last Placement Result, 2005–06**

	Grade 4	Grade 7	Grade 10
Currently in Foster Care	20.9%	8.3%	20.8%
Dependency Guardianship	26.4%	14.4%	26.6%
Returned to Custody of Parent/Guardian	23.9%	16.9%	28.2%
Adoption	26.7%	16.7%	38.3%
Other (Aged Out, Guardianship, or Transfer)	29.0%	12.5%	29.2%

Differences in educational achievement are also evident among foster youth with multiple placements. Foster care “episodes” represent a continuous period where the state is responsible for the child. Multiple events, such as foster home, group home, relative care placements, detention, on the run, and hospital stays can take place within an episode. Episodes with less than three events are often characterized as stable placements. Exhibit 11 shows the average number of events per episode for foster students who met and did not meet WASL standards.

Exhibit 11

Average Placement Events per Episode for Foster Youth—Met Standard in All Three WASL Areas, 2005–06

	Grade 4	Grade 7	Grade 10
Average placement events per episode for youth meeting WASL standards	1.69	1.47	1.59
Average placement events per episode for youth not meeting WASL standards	1.70	2.34	2.60
Difference	0.01	0.87	1.01

Older foster youth (grades 7 and 10) who met standard in all three content areas on the 2006 WASL had about one fewer placement event in each episode, compared with those who did not meet standard. In addition, foster students who did not meet standard were characterized by more unstable placement episodes with more than two events in each placement.

In addition to more stable placements, older foster youth who met standard on the WASL also had fewer placements and less total time in placement, compared with those who did not meet standard. Exhibit 12 displays placement information for these two groups of foster students.

Exhibit 12
**Average Placements and Total Placement Time for Foster Youth—
 Met Standard in All Three WASL Areas, 2005–06**

	Grade 4		Grade 7		Grade 10	
	Average Placements	Average Placement Months	Average Placements	Average Placement Months	Average Placements	Average Placement Months
Foster youth meeting WASL standards	2.96	23.5	2.80	24.7	2.78	26.0
Foster youth not meeting WASL standards	3.10	23.3	3.81	27.7	3.76	35.5
Difference	0.14	(0.2)	1.01	3.0	0.98	9.5

Again, foster youth in grades 7 and 10 who did not pass the WASL had more overall placements than those who met standard. These youth were also in foster care longer, on average, than students who did meet WASL standards. Tenth-grade foster youth who did not meet all three WASL standards were in care for nearly three years, on average—over nine months longer than foster youth who did meet standard.

Previous research on educational achievement of foster youth has also found an academic gap between foster youth and other students. But, these studies have also not established a clear relationship between foster placement background and performance on assessments. The next section compares findings from Washington State with studies that focused on the educational attainment of foster youth.

A statistical analysis that looked at the relationship between placement history and WASL scores did not point to any factors that had a significant and meaningful relationship. That is, when other risk factors discussed previously (such as poverty status, ethnicity, school longevity, and grade level) are analyzed in conjunction with foster care placement information, placement history shows no association to WASL scores. Many characteristics, such as placement stability and length, may not carry the statistical weight of other risk factors observed in the school setting.

SECTION II: LITERATURE AND LEGISLATION

LITERATURE REVIEW

A wide range of studies have reported on the educational outcomes of foster youth. Research in recent years has attempted to determine how child and family characteristics interact with the foster care system and school environment to influence educational achievement. The range of outcome measures in which foster youth lag behind other students is broad—foster youth typically have worse outcomes in attendance, graduation, grades, school stability, and college enrollment. This review, however, focuses on the key measures of interest in this study—assessment scores, special education enrollment, and grade retention. In a review of these studies, Susan Stone notes that “there are potentially three factors that relate to the educational performance of maltreated children: the effect of maltreatment itself, the effects associated with exposure to socio-demographic risk, in particular residential mobility, and the experience of living without biological parents.”⁹

The effects of maltreatment, such as physical and psychological neglect, physical abuse, and sexual abuse, put youth at a greater risk of developing psychological problems and learning disabilities.¹⁰ Emotional and cognitive delays are reflected in the high rate of special education placement among youth in the foster care system. Andrea Zetlin and Lois Weinberg note that “whereas 10 percent of the general population receives special education services, 25 to 52 percent of children in foster care are placed in special education, generally related to either a learning disability or a serious emotional disturbance.”¹¹ Previous work in Washington State found that, at both the elementary and secondary level, more than twice as many foster youth as non-foster youth had enrolled in special education programs.¹²

⁹ S. Stone. (2007). Child maltreatment, out-of-home placement and academic vulnerability: A fifteen-year review of evidence and future directions. *Children and Youth Services Review* 29(2): 139-161.

¹⁰ L. Gauthier, G. Stollak, L. Messe, & J. Arnoff. (1996). Recall of childhood neglect and physical abuse as differential predictors of current psychological functioning. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 20(7): 549-559.

¹¹ A.G. Zetlin & L.A. Weinberg. (2004). Understanding the plight of foster youth and improving their educational opportunities. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 28(9): 917-923.

¹² Burley & Halpern, 2001.

Diagnosed emotional and behavioral disorders are just one measure of the difficulties faced by youth in the foster care system. Removal from a family home, familiar school, or foster care setting may lead children to exhibit problem behaviors in the classroom, ranging from becoming withdrawn to being overly aggressive and anxious.¹³ In a three-state survey of youth preparing to leave foster care, Courtney, Terao, and Bost report that foster youth are “at higher risk to experience grade retention, more than twice as likely to be suspended, and nearly four times as likely to be expelled from school” compared with other students without a background in foster care.¹⁴

A significant number of foster youth also repeat a grade level. In a study of foster youth in Washington State, twice as many foster youth reported repeating a grade, compared with other students.¹⁵ Among youth in care in New York State, nearly 45 percent reported being retained at least once in school.¹⁶ Approximately 40 percent of foster youth in Chicago Public Schools were old for their grade. When accounting for demographic factors, Cheryl Smithgall et al. found that foster youth were nearly two times as likely to repeat a grade as students in the same school.¹⁷

Given the differences in the educational backgrounds of foster youth, it should not be surprising that students in foster care score significantly below other students in assessment tests. In the study of foster youth in Chicago Public Schools, almost 50 percent of 3rd- to 8th-grade students in out-of-home care scored in the bottom quartile on the reading section of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS). In terms of test scores, foster youth had “differences ranging from 13 to 21 percentage points.”¹⁸ This gap almost mirrors the

¹³ Zetlin & Weinberg, 2004; C. McMillen, W. Auslander, D. Elze, T. White, & R. Thompson. (2003). Educational experiences and aspirations of older youth in foster care. *Child Welfare* 82(4): 475-495.

¹⁴ M. Courtney, S. Terao, & N. Bost. (2004). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Conditions of youth preparing to leave state care*. Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. <http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/yd/resources/publications/pdfs/chapin.pdf>, p. 42.

¹⁵ Burley & Halpern, 2001.

¹⁶ Advocates for Children of New York, Inc. (2000). *Educational neglect: The delivery of educational services to children of New York City's foster care system*. New York: Author. <http://www.advocatesforchildren.org/pubs/2005/fostercare.pdf>

¹⁷ C. Smithgall, R. Gladden, E. Howard, R. Goerge, & M. Courtney. (2004). *Educational experiences of children in out-of-home care (CS-107)*. Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. http://www.fftta.org/research_outcomes/res_education.pdf

¹⁸ Ibid.

16 to 20 percentage point difference in ITBS scores between foster and non-foster students in Washington State.¹⁹

Smithgall et al. also compared achievement levels of youth in foster care with other youth who had been abused and neglected (and not placed in out-of-home care). Achievement levels for the group in foster care were slightly lower than those of other children with a history of abuse and neglect. This finding suggests that “a substantial portion of the achievement gap for students in care may be attributable to their experiences of abuse and neglect.”²⁰

A statistical analysis of youth leaving care in Washington State did find differences in the successful transition to adulthood (including rates of educational completion) among youth with a history of maltreatment. According to this study, “youth who experienced certain types of abuse (sexual abuse, neglect and abandonment) may require special attention in order to achieve the same levels of success as other youth.”²¹

The next section covers new programs and legislation at the federal and state level designed to help improve educational outcomes for students in foster care.²²

FEDERAL CHILD WELFARE LEGISLATION

Independent Living. In 1986, the federal government established Independent Living Programs to assist adolescent foster youth with education and employment by providing life-skills training and support services up to age 21. The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (also known as the Chafee Act), doubled the amount of federal funding, from \$70 million to \$140 million, for independent living services. The Chafee Foster Care Independence Program specifies five types of activities that states may

implement with federal funds for children likely to remain in foster care until age 18:

- Help receiving a high school diploma and obtaining basic living skills (financial management, preventative health, daily living);
- Assistance with education and training necessary to obtain employment;
- Preparation and support for entering post-secondary education and training (i.e., college, universities, or technical schools);
- Personal and emotional support (i.e., mentors) for children aging out of foster care; and
- Transitional financial and support services for young adults (18 to 21) who have left the foster care system.

In Federal Fiscal Year 2007, Washington State received \$2.6 million in federal funds for the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. In 2006, more than 1,300 foster youth over age 15 participated in independent and transitional living programs in Washington State.²³

Education and Training Vouchers. The Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendments (PSSFA) of 2001 added a new provision to the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and created federal Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) for foster youth. ETVs are available to youth who leave foster care at age 18, or to those adopted from foster care at age 16 or older. Up to \$5,000 is available per student each year to pay for tuition or educational expenses at an approved college, university, or vocational training program.

Youth may apply for the ETVs each year until they turn 21. Youth are eligible for educational assistance up to age 23 if they previously received an ETV. The ETV program was first implemented in Washington State in 2003. In Federal Fiscal Year 2007, the state received approximately \$900,000 in federal funds for the ETV program. The DSHS Children’s Administration administers this program. During the 2005–06 school year, 207 Washington youth received educational assistance from ETVs.²⁴

¹⁹ Burley & Halpern, 2001.

²⁰ Smithgall, et al., 2004, p. 17.

²¹ C. Brandford & D. English. (2004). *Foster youth transition to independence study*. Seattle: Office of Children’s Administration Research, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services.

²² For a detailed discussion of how collaboration between the child welfare and educational systems can be improved, see S. Altshuler. (2003). From barriers to successful collaboration: Public schools and child welfare working together. *Social Work* 48(1): 52-63.

²³ In 2006, over 50 percent of eligible youth participated in these voluntary services (up from 33 percent participation in 2005).

²⁴ For more information, see <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/ca/services/srvAdlsFAQ.asp#ETV>

Child and Family Services Reviews. In January 2000, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families (ACF) established a new approach for monitoring the safety, permanency, child, and family well-being of foster youth in state child welfare programs. The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process has three goals: (1) ensure states are conforming to federal child welfare requirements, (2) determine if children and families are achieving desirable outcomes, and (3) assist states in meeting the goals outlined in the reviews.

The CFSR process includes three parts:

- **A statewide assessment** where the state completes a self-assessment of programs and services prior to the federal review.
- **An on-site review** conducted by a federal team that focuses on case reviews of hard-copy and computer records, and interviews with children, family members, state child welfare staff, and other professionals serving the family.
- **A Program Improvement Plan (PIP)** where the state is required to issue a plan to address areas of non-compliance. The state has two years to satisfy the goals outlined in the PIP. States that do not meet areas of non-compliance after this two-year period can be subject to financial penalties.

As of March 2004, all 50 states had completed Child and Family Services Reviews. Washington's on-site review took place in November 2003 and a final report was issued in February 2004. At the end of the PIP period (September 2006), Washington met six of the seven outcome areas focused on the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in care.

One of these measures of well-being (WB2) determines whether or not "children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs." This measure considers reasons for school changes; types of educational programs in which children are enrolled; identification of educational needs and appropriate services to meet these needs; whether testing/evaluation occurred; when needed; whether educational records are included in the case file; and

activities performed to address children's educational needs (e.g., advocacy).

The on-site review (conducted in November 2003) found that Washington did not achieve conformity with federal goals—educational outcomes were achieved in 77 percent of applicable cases.²⁵ At the end of the two-year PIP period, however, Washington achieved compliance in 87 percent of cases in this area and met federal standards.²⁶

The next section details some of the steps taken in Washington State to improve educational services and support for foster youth.

WASHINGTON STATE INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS

In 2002, the Washington State Legislature created a Foster Children Education Workgroup (SSB 6709) to provide recommendations on maintaining educational stability and continuity for youth in foster care. The workgroup issued several recommendations to help foster youth remain in their home schools whenever possible.²⁷ Recommendations also included steps to improve communication between the child welfare, education, and court systems. In response to this report, the 2003 Legislature made policy changes in the following areas:

- Enacted a state policy that affirms foster youth should remain in the schools they were attending prior to placement (RCW 74.13.550).
- Directed the Children's Administration to develop protocols with OSPI and individual school districts to improve educational stability for foster youth and effectively share information between the schools and child welfare agencies (RCW 74.13.560).

²⁵ This item was rated a strength in 95 percent of the foster care cases compared with 50 percent of the in-home services cases (typically cases involving Family Reconciliation Services, or FRS). See <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/region10/extra/wacfsrpt.pdf>

²⁶ See <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/ca/06PIP4.pdf> for a review of outcomes achieved at the end of the Program Improvement Plan.

²⁷ Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. (2002). *Report to the Legislature: Coordinated services and educational planning for children in out-of-home care*. Olympia: Department of Social and Health Services. <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/EA/GovRel/Leg1102/FSPR.pdf>

The Legislature also established an oversight committee (RCW 74.13.570) to assist with foster parent recruiting in target school districts and promote strategies that improve educational stability of foster youth.

Educational Advocacy Program. In February 2006, the Children's Administration implemented a statewide Educational Advocacy program to support foster youth and caregivers in obtaining needed education-related information and services. One or two Educational Advocacy Coordinators (EACs) are assigned to each DSHS region. Coordinators work together with social workers, youth, and caregivers to:

- Consult with school officials, foster families, and child welfare caseworkers on appropriate services for children with unmet educational needs.
- Work cooperatively with students and school staff to help reduce discipline problems, improve school attendance, and increase access to academic supports.
- Provide training to social workers, caregivers, teachers, and others on the roles and responsibilities of all parties in helping ensure the educational progress of foster youth.

The EACs have a broad knowledge of applicable federal and state laws and can direct foster parents and schools to appropriate resources to make sure youth can achieve their educational goals. During 2007, EACs across the state received approximately 2,400 referrals for assistance.

Foster Care to College. The Foster Care to College Partnership (FCTCP) is a cooperative effort involving OSPI, Children's Administration, Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB), and College Success Foundation. The goal of the partnership is to increase high school graduation rates and improve post-secondary enrollment and completion outcomes for emancipating foster youth. FCTCP is a statewide, three-year, foundation-funded project.

The partnership offers college informational seminars to middle and high school students. The FCTCP also recruits high-school age foster

youth for a four-day, summer college preparation program (called Make It Happen!) sponsored by the College Success Foundation.

The FCTCP also implements a mentoring program that matches an adult mentor to foster youth age 16 to 21. Mentors help assist these youth with completing high school and pursuing post-secondary goals. The mentors provide information, encouragement, and support for youth working toward post-high school education and training. Finally, the FCTCP has created a comprehensive website (www.independence.wa.gov) to offer foster students, parents, and social workers detailed information on college preparation.

NEXT STEPS

The Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) is designed to ensure that children have the appropriate knowledge and skills after leaving school. As of 2008, these assessments are also part of the state's graduation requirements. Beginning in 2006, the Children's Administration implemented new programs aimed at improving the educational achievement of foster youth. The Educational Advocacy Program started in February 2006 and improved Child Health and Education Tracking (CHET) screenings also started in mid 2006. Unfortunately, since we analyzed 2006 WASL data, it was not possible to assess outcomes for foster students served by these programs in this report. In the coming years, however, the Institute plans to repeat this analysis and also assess additional educational outcomes. The following reports are currently planned:

September 2008: Graduation Outcomes for Foster Youth

December 2008: WASL Outcomes for Foster Youth (compare 2006 and 2007 results)

June 2009: Analysis of Educational Advocacy Program and Child Health and Education Tracking (CHET) Screenings

December 2009: WASL Outcomes for Foster Youth (2006, 2007, and 2008 results)

By monitoring the educational status of foster youth, it will be possible to identify areas where improvement is occurring and where more assistance may be helpful.

APPENDIX

I. DIFFERENCES IN STUDY METHODOLOGY

The 2000 Washington State Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) to:

review and summarize existing research that identifies problems and barriers to improved educational attainment of children in long-term foster care, and suggest ways to improve the availability of information about the educational experiences of these children.... (EHB 2487)

In November 2001, the Institute published *Educational Attainment of Foster Youth: Achievement and Graduation Outcomes for Children in State Care* with the results from this study. This research represented one of the first efforts to compare assessment results for foster and non-foster youth across elementary and secondary grade levels.

The Braam Panel's February 2006 Implementation Plan (<http://www.braampanel.org/ImpPlanFeb06.pdf>) directs Children's Administration of the Department of Social and Health Services to:

...replicate the 2001 WSIPP study...for school-age children in foster care three months or longer in FY 2005, with inclusion of WASL performance for 4th, 7th and 10th grades and all other variables in the study. The study may be done by CA following the methods used in the 2001 study, or contracted to WSIPP or another research organization. The study will be replicated every two years over the Settlement.

The Institute's Board of Directors in December 2006 provided approval for the Institute to complete this study. Changes in programs, policies, and data availability, however, prevented Institute researchers from exactly replicating the methodology used in the original 2001 research. Exhibit A1 outlines differences between the studies completed in 2001 and 2008, and reasons for alternative approaches.

Exhibit A1
Differences Between WSIPP Foster Care Educational Outcomes Analyses

Topic	2001 WSIPP Report	2008 WSIPP Report
Study Sample	Students in Grades 3, 6, and 9	Students in Grades 4, 7, and 10
Assessment Outcomes	Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS)—grades 3 and 6 Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED)—grade 9 <i>(Iowa tests eliminated in 2006)</i>	Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)—grades 4, 7, and 10
Assessment Type	<i>Norm-referenced</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranks each student to the achievement of others • Test items help discriminate between high and low achievers • Individual assessment scores are compared and assigned a percentile or grade-equivalent score 	<i>Criterion-referenced</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determines whether each student has achieved specific skills • Test items are designed to assess competence in key concepts • Individuals are compared with preset standards for acceptable achievement
Assessment Covariates	Student information questionnaire (self-reported information on demographics, school history, and family background). <i>This survey was discontinued in April 2006.</i>	Administrative records on demographics, program participation, school mobility, and retention
Outcome Analysis	Increase/decrease in National Percentile Ranking (continuous 1–100); Ordinary Least Squares Regression	Likelihood of meeting WASL standard (yes/no); Logistical Regression

In the years following the publication of the 2001 report, the state moved increasingly to the criterion-based Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) to measure students' educational progress. Legislation in 2005 (EHB 1068) removed the requirement that districts administer the norm-referenced Iowa tests. Consequently, the analyses presented in this report focus on the probability of meeting standard on statewide WASL tests. There are important differences in the outcomes and approach between the 2001 and 2008 reports, and direct comparisons are not possible given the different nature of the tests. Both analyses, however, show a significant gap in educational achievement between foster and non-foster youth. In addition, each report highlights the over-representation of foster youth in special education classes, the high rate of foster youth who have been held back a grade, and the frequency with which foster youth change schools or school districts. Over the next two years, we plan to replicate the analysis of WASL outcomes for foster youth, comparing these initial results with those for future cohorts. The remaining sections of the appendix provide additional technical detail about this analysis.

II. RECORD LINKAGE

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of individual student records. Under this law, schools must have written consent from a parent or eligible student in order to release educational records. Exceptions to this provision include:

- school officials with legitimate educational interest;
- other schools to which a student is transferring;
- specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
- appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
- organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
- accrediting organizations;
- appropriate officials in cases of judicial orders, health or safety emergencies; and
- state and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific state law.

In Washington State, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) holds certain educational records necessary for program budgeting and reporting purposes. OSPI, however, may not release individually identified student records to third parties.

To complete this study, therefore, the Institute obtained permission from the Washington State Human Research Review Board (HRRB) to release foster care records to OSPI. The foster care records included youth within the expected age range for each grade. Approved OSPI research staff matched these foster care records to the students' Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) test scores and removed personally identifying information from the analysis dataset.

Exhibit A2
Students With Foster Care Background, 2005–06 School Year

Grade	WASL-Eligible Students (2005–06)	Students With Current or Previous Foster Placement	Students With Foster Placements Lasting Three or More Months
4	74,594	1,910 (2.6%)	1,150 (1.5%)
7	79,519	2,335 (2.9%)	1,347 (1.7%)
10	81,553	2,299 (2.8%)	1,276 (1.6%)

Exhibit A2 shows the number of foster youth matched to state WASL records for the 2005–06 school year. Nearly 3 percent of students in each grade level had a previous foster care placement. This report, however, focuses on youth who had been in foster care for three months or longer. Slightly less than 2 percent of all students had ever been in foster care for three or more months.

III. STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS (4TH AND 7TH GRADES)

**Exhibit A3
Student Characteristics of 4th Graders Completing the 2005–06 WASL**

Category of Student	Percentage of 4th Graders		Met Standard in All Three Areas	
	Non-Foster	Foster	Non-Foster	Foster
All Students	98.6%	1.4%	47.4%	24.3%
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2.6%	15.3%	30.0%	17.4%
Asian American	8.8%	1.4%	59.7%	38.5%
African American (Not of Hispanic Origin)	5.7%	15.9%	28.4%	19.3%
Hispanic/Latino	14.5%	10.9%	27.0%	23.3%
Caucasian (Not of Hispanic Origin)	68.5%	56.5%	52.5%	27.6%
Gender				
Female	49.6%	50.9%	52.4%	25.4%
Male	50.4%	49.1%	42.5%	23.1%
Poverty Status				
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	39.4%	83.0%	30.8%	23.1%
School Status				
Behind Grade Level	10.0%	17.4%	32.5%	14.7%
Time in Same District				
One Year or Less	17.4%	32.5%	41.4%	20.9%
One to Two Years	10.7%	15.2%	41.4%	22.4%
Longer Than Two Years	71.9%	52.3%	49.8%	26.7%

**Exhibit A4
Characteristics of 4th Graders
Completing the 2005–06 WASL and Alternative Assessments**

Category of Student	Percentage of 4th Graders		Met Standard in All Three Areas	
	Non-Foster	Foster	Non-Foster	Foster
All Students	98.5%	1.5%	46.5%	23.2%
Disability Status				
No Disability	87.0%	72.6%	51.0%	29.0%
Emotional/Behavioral Disability	0.4%	3.0%	11.5%	3.2%
Health Disability	2.1%	7.6%	9.2%	8.9%
Specific Learning Disability	5.9%	11.1%	7.1%	4.3%
Other Disability	4.6%	5.8%	31.5%	16.7%
Special Education Status				
Received Special Education Services	12.3%	25.7%	15.4%	6.3%

Exhibit A5
Characteristics of 7th Graders Completing the 2005–06 WASL

Category of Student	Percentage of 7th Graders		Met Standard in All Three Areas	
	Non-Foster	Foster	Non-Foster	Foster
All Students	98.5%	1.5%	40.2%	14.8%
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2.4%	10.0%	21.9%	18.4%
Asian American	8.3%	2.0%	50.7%	9.5%
African American (Not of Hispanic Origin)	5.4%	16.9%	20.6%	8.6%
Hispanic/Latino	13.0%	10.3%	18.6%	6.6%
Caucasian (Not of Hispanic Origin)	70.9%	60.9%	45.1%	17.4%
Gender				
Female	49.5%	53.1%	44.6%	18.7%
Male	50.5%	46.9%	35.9%	10.4%
Poverty Status				
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	36.0%	78.9%	22.6%	13.6%
School Status				
Behind Grade Level	11.7%	23.7%	23.0%	9.5%
Time in Same District				
One Year or Less	16.0%	32.2%	32.0%	13.2%
One to Two Years	17.2%	20.4%	38.1%	11.1%
Longer Than Two Years	66.8%	47.4%	42.7%	17.6%

Exhibit A6
**Characteristics for 7th Graders Completing the 2005–06 WASL
and Alternative Assessments**

Category of Student	Percentage of 7th Graders		Met Standard in All Three Areas	
	Non-Foster	Foster	Non-Foster	Foster
All Students	98.4%	1.6%	39.1%	13.5%
Disability Status				
No Disability	89.4%	68.7%	43.0%	18.2%
Emotional/Behavioral Disability	0.5%	4.6%	5.0%	3.6%
Health Disability	2.4%	9.4%	4.0%	5.4%
Specific Learning Disability	5.7%	11.9%	2.6%	1.4%
Other Disability	2.0%	5.4%	18.9%	3.1%
Special Education Status				
Received Special Education Services	9.9%	29.9%	4.5%	3.1%

IV. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS: PERCENTAGE INCREASE (OR DECREASE) IN LIKELIHOOD OF MEETING 2005–06 WASL STANDARDS

**Exhibit A7
Met Standard in All Three WASL Content Areas, 4th Grade**

	Regression Coefficient	Standard Error	Odds Ratio
<i>Foster Youth (three months or more)</i>	-0.4252**	0.0815	0.654
Female	0.3517**	0.0168	1.421
African American	-0.7540**	0.0388	0.407
Asian American	0.4228**	0.0315	1.526
Hispanic/Latino	-0.4488**	0.0304	0.638
Native American	-0.6652**	0.0551	0.514
Same District: One Year or Less	-0.2797**	0.0224	0.756
Same District: One to Two Years	-0.2105**	0.0275	0.810
Special Education Services	-0.3040	0.1985	0.738
Free and Reduced Price Lunch Eligibility	-0.8205**	0.0187	0.440
Behind One Grade in School	-0.3982**	0.0296	0.671
Emotional/Behavioral Disability	-1.5954**	0.2821	0.203
Health Related Disability	-2.0181**	0.2209	0.133
Specific Learning Disability	-2.3144**	0.2103	0.099
Other Disability	-0.4440*	0.1971	0.641
Learning Assistance Program	-1.3316**	0.0460	0.264
English Not Primary Language	-0.4666**	0.0308	0.627
	Cases	Rsq	AUC
	32,695	0.2189	0.729

Notes: **significant at 0.01 level, *significant at 0.05 level. Race estimates are relative to Caucasian, Same District estimates are relative to more than two years in the district, Disability estimates are relative to no disability.

Exhibit A8
Met Standard in All Three WASL Content Areas, 7th Grade

	Regression Coefficient	Standard Error	Odds Ratio
Foster Youth (three months or more)	-0.6180**	0.0929	0.539
Female	0.3238**	0.0167	1.382
African American	-0.8473**	0.0431	0.429
Asian American	0.4207**	0.0314	1.523
Hispanic/Latino	-0.6211**	0.0330	0.537
Native American	-0.7915**	0.0607	0.453
Same District: One Year or Less	-0.4195**	0.0237	0.657
Same District: One to Two Years	-0.1075**	0.0228	0.898
Special Education Services	-1.0088**	0.2786	0.365
Free and Reduced Price Lunch Eligibility	-0.8977**	0.0195	0.408
Behind One Grade in School	-0.5965**	0.0292	0.551
Emotional/Behavioral Disability	-1.2878**	0.3708	0.276
Health Related Disability	-1.6741**	0.3022	0.187
Specific Learning Disability	-2.4349**	0.3002	0.088
Other Disability	-0.2164	0.2706	0.805
Learning Assistance Program	-2.0921**	0.0687	0.123
English Not Primary Language	-0.5142**	0.0355	0.598
	Cases	Rsqr	AUC
	29,094	0.2355	0.737

Exhibit A9
Met Standard in All Three WASL Content Areas, 10th Grade

	Regression Coefficient	Standard Error	Odds Ratio
Foster Youth (three months or more)	-0.4713**	0.0954	0.624
Female	-0.1623**	0.0172	0.850
African American	-1.1205**	0.0466	0.326
Asian American	0.2906**	0.0332	1.337
Hispanic/Latino	-0.7212**	0.0344	0.486
Native American	-0.7335**	0.0599	0.480
Same District: One Year or Less	-0.4298**	0.0262	0.651
Same District: One to Two Years	-0.0666**	0.0230	0.936
Special Education Services	-1.1295**	0.3276	0.323
Free and Reduced Price Lunch Eligibility	-0.8296**	0.0209	0.436
Behind One Grade in School	-0.6375**	0.0285	0.529
Emotional/Behavioral Disability	-1.0261*	0.4087	0.358
Health Related Disability	-1.0699**	0.3394	0.343
Specific Learning Disability	-1.7538**	0.3300	0.173
Other Disability	-0.2498	0.3326	0.779
Learning Assistance Program	-1.5756**	0.0628	0.207
English Not Primary Language	-0.5263**	0.0380	0.591
	Cases	Rsqr	AUC
	34,857	0.1942	0.701

Notes: **significant at 0.01 level, *significant at 0.05 level. Race estimates are relative to Caucasian, Same District estimates are relative to more than two years in the district, Disability estimates are relative to no disability.

Exhibit A10
Met Standard in WASL Reading, 4th Grade

	Regression Coefficient	Standard Error	Odds Ratio
Foster Youth (three months or more)	-0.1894*	0.0789	0.827
Female	0.3103**	0.0222	1.364
African American	-0.7701**	0.0410	0.463
Asian American	0.1466**	0.0451	1.158
Hispanic/Latino	-0.4308**	0.0349	0.650
Native American	-0.7564**	0.0572	0.469
Same District: One Year or Less	-0.3033**	0.0279	0.738
Same District: One to Two Years	-0.2955**	0.0333	0.744
Special Education Services	-0.4959**	0.1758	0.609
Free and Reduced Price Lunch Eligibility	-0.7247**	0.0244	0.484
Behind One Grade in School	-0.3098**	0.0324	0.734
Emotional/Behavioral Disability	-1.3346**	0.2111	0.263
Health Related Disability	-1.7584**	0.1839	0.172
Specific Learning Disability	-1.8281**	0.1779	0.161
Other Disability	-0.6028**	0.1769	0.547
Learning Assistance Program	-0.8706**	0.0444	0.419
English Not Primary Language	-0.8165**	0.0340	0.442
	Cases	Rsq	AUC
	57,612	0.2399	0.776

Exhibit A11
Met Standard in WASL Reading, 7th Grade

	Regression Coefficient	Standard Error	Odds Ratio
Foster Youth (three months or more)	-0.2987**	0.0689	0.742
Female	0.3011**	0.0169	1.351
African American	-0.7164**	0.0359	0.488
Asian American	0.1308**	0.0329	1.140
Hispanic/Latino	-0.4711**	0.0288	0.624
Native American	-0.6435**	0.0510	0.525
Same District: One Year or Less	-0.3696**	0.0227	0.691
Same District: One to Two Years	-0.1233**	0.0228	0.884
Special Education Services	-1.0219**	0.1996	0.360
Free and Reduced Price Lunch Eligibility	-0.7480*	0.0184	0.473
Behind One Grade in School	-0.4445**	0.0255	0.641
Emotional/Behavioral Disability	-1.0285**	0.2405	0.358
Health Related Disability	-1.0548**	0.2077	0.348
Specific Learning Disability	-1.3633**	0.2017	0.256
Other Disability	-0.3437	0.2001	0.709
Learning Assistance Program	-1.3222**	0.0481	0.267
English Not Primary Language	-0.7104**	0.0306	0.491
	Cases	Rsq	AUC
	46,316	0.2325	0.739

Notes: **significant at 0.01 level, *significant at 0.05 level. Race estimates are relative to Caucasian, Same District estimates are relative to more than two years in the district, Disability estimates are relative to no disability.

Exhibit A12
Met Standard in WASL Reading, 10th Grade

	Regression Coefficient	Standard Error	Odds Ratio
Foster Youth (three months or more)	-0.4022**	0.0890	0.669
Female	0.2855**	0.0249	1.330
African American	-0.7403**	0.0494	0.477
Asian American	0.1510**	0.0501	1.163
Hispanic/Latino	-0.5806**	0.0400	0.560
Native American	-0.7843**	0.0666	0.456
Same District: One Year or Less	-0.5511**	0.0336	0.576
Same District: One to Two Years	-0.2395**	0.0321	0.787
Special Education Services	-0.7408**	0.2539	0.477
Free and Reduced Price Lunch Eligibility	-0.8068**	0.0269	0.446
Behind One Grade in School	-0.7193**	0.0318	0.487
Emotional/Behavioral Disability	-1.6297**	0.2852	0.196
Health Related Disability	-1.4458**	0.2601	0.236
Specific Learning Disability	-1.7323**	0.2540	0.177
Other Disability	-1.3961**	0.2632	0.248
Learning Assistance Program	-0.9845**	0.0607	0.374
English Not Primary Language	-1.0457**	0.0406	0.351
	Cases	Rsq	AUC
	60,135	0.2519	0.787

Notes: **significant at 0.01 level, *significant at 0.05 level. Race estimates are relative to Caucasian, Same District estimates are relative to more than two years in the district, Disability estimates are relative to no disability.

V. ADDITIONAL FOSTER CARE HISTORY RESULTS

Results presented in Exhibits A7–A12 display information about the relationship of foster care placements to passing the WASL. This section includes additional information about the background of foster youth taking the 2005–06 WASL. Many of the differences presented in this section are not statistically significant, but are shown to provide additional context for the overall analysis.

Exhibit A13 displays the average age of foster youth at the point they started care. As this table demonstrates, there are not significant differences in the average age at first placement for youth who passed the 2005–06 WASL compared with those who did not meet WASL standards.

Exhibit A13
Average Age (in Years) of Foster Youth at First Foster Placement

	Grade 4	Grade 7	Grade 10
Met WASL Standards— Average Age When Starting Care	4.0	5.2	7.6
<i>n</i>	235	158	180
Did Not Meet WASL Standards— Average Age When Starting Care	4.1	5.2	7.4
<i>n</i>	734	911	481

Exhibit A14 shows the average length of the most recent foster care episode for foster youth according to their WASL met-standard status. The only statistically significant difference ($p=0.02$) in these two groups occurred among 10th graders. The most recent episode for 10th graders who did not meet standard on the WASL was 30 months, compared with 24 months for students who did meet WASL standards in 2005–06.

Exhibit A14
Average Length (in Months) of Most Recent Foster Care Placement Episode

	Grade 4	Grade 7	Grade 10
Met WASL Standards— Length of Most Recent Episode	21.6	23.3	24.4
<i>n</i>	235	158	180
Did Not Meet WASL Standards— Length of Most Recent Episode	21.1	24.5	30.0
<i>n</i>	734	911	481

Foster care placements can be interrupted during the course of an episode if foster youth are placed in juvenile detention or “on run” from care. In our analysis, 4th- and 7th-grade foster youth did not have a significant number of detention or runaway events. Exhibit A15 shows the WASL met-standard rates for 10th-grade foster youth with a detention or “on run” event during the course of a foster care placement. As a result of the relative infrequency of these events, the differences are not statistically significant. For foster youth who did run from placement or enter detention, however, very few subsequently met standard on the WASL.

Exhibit A15
Average Number of Detention or “On Run” Events per Episode—
10th-Grade Foster Youth by WASL Met-Standard Status, 2005–06

	Detention Event		“On Run” Event	
	Met WASL Standards	Did Not Meet WASL Standards	Met WASL Standards	Did Not Meet WASL Standards
Zero	175 (27.8%)	455 (72.2%)	175 (27.9%)	452 (72.1%)
One	3 (20.0%)	12 (80.0%)	3 (15.0%)	17 (85.0%)
Two or More	2 (12.5%)	14 (87.5%)	2 (14.3%)	12 (85.7%)

In Washington State, foster parents may receive different levels of payment based on the treatment and supervision needs of each child. In some cases, foster youth may be placed in **unlicensed care** with a relative caregiver. In a **family foster care** setting, a licensed foster parent receives a basic foster care rate to care for the child. **Enhanced family foster care** payments may be provided if the foster family requires additional services such as case aides, respite care, or supplemental home-based care. Finally, **therapeutic care** (contracted through community agencies) may be necessary for dependent children with a high level of behavioral needs. Exhibit A16 shows the distribution of foster youth who have ever been classified in one of these settings and breaks out each group according to whether or not they met standard on the 2005–06 WASL. Met-standard rates among 7th and 10th graders are statistically significant ($p=0.02, 0.03$) and show a higher no-pass rate as need for treatment services rises.

Exhibit A16
WASL Met-Standard Status by Foster Care Services, 2005–06

	Grade 4		Grade 7		Grade 10	
	Met WASL Standards	Did Not Meet WASL Standards	Met WASL Standards	Did Not Meet WASL Standards	Met WASL Standards	Did Not Meet WASL Standards
Unlicensed Care	70 (25.7%)	202 (74.3%)	43 (16.3%)	220 (83.7%)	69 (31.9%)	147 (68.1%)
Family (Basic) Foster Care	113 (26.7%)	310 (73.3%)	76 (17.8%)	351 (82.2%)	57 (29.4%)	137 (70.6%)
Enhanced (Treatment) Foster Care	39 (19.2%)	164 (80.8%)	29 (11.0%)	234 (89.0%)	40 (24.0%)	127 (76.0%)
Therapeutic Foster Care	13 (18.3%)	58 (81.7%)	10 (8.6%)	106 (91.4%)	14 (16.7%)	70 (83.3%)

For further information, contact Mason Burley at
(360) 528-1645 or mason@wsipp.wa.gov

Document No. 08-03-3901



*Washington State
Institute for
Public Policy*

The Washington State Legislature created the Washington State Institute for Public Policy in 1983. A Board of Directors—representing the legislature, the governor, and public universities—governs the Institute and guides the development of all activities. The Institute's mission is to carry out practical research, at legislative direction, on issues of importance to Washington State.