Washington State
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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: WASL REPORTS TO DATE

The 2006 Washington State Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to analyze data to increase understanding of student performance on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) and to review additional student assessment options.[1] This summary presents findings on these topics, organized by report release date.

To download individual reports, visit: http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/series.asp?seriesid=2

WASL REPORTS SUMMARY

A Historic Look at the WASL and High School Graduation. 2004 high school graduates performed better on the WASL than did non-graduates: nearly 42 percent of graduates met standard on all three reading, writing, and math assessments, compared with 14 percent of students who did not graduate. (September 2006)

Tenth-Grade WASL in Spring 2006: Summary Results. Of 10th-grade students who took the spring 2006 WASL, 85.7 percent met standard in reading, 83.7 percent in writing, and 54.1 percent in math. Just over half (53.6 percent) met standard in all three subject areas. (October 2006)

How Different Base Populations Affect WASL Results. The percentage of students who meet standard can vary depending on who is included in the calculation. As a percentage of students who were slated to take the WASL in spring 2006 (N=78,020), 44.9 percent met standard in all three subject areas; of those who completed all three WASL exams (N=65,362), 53.6 percent met standard. For both calculations, the number of students who met standard (N=35,034) is the same. (November 2006)

Tenth-Grade Alternate Assessments for Special Populations: Summary Results. In spring 2006, 4.4 percent of 10th graders were scheduled to take one of three special education alternate assessments: the WASL-Modified (which sets the "met-standard" cutoff at level 2 rather than level 3); the Washington Alternate Assessment System (WAAS) Portfolio; or the Developmentally Appropriate WASL (WASL-DAW).[2] The percentage of students who met standard in all three subject areas is as follows: WASL-Modified, 17 percent; WAAS-Portfolio, 62 percent; and WASL-DAW, 10 percent. (November 2006)

Tenth-Grade WASL in Spring 2006: Results by Race and Ethnicity. The percentage of 10th graders by race/ethnicity who met standard in all three subject areas of the spring 2006 WASL is as follows: Asian students, 60.7 percent; White students, 58.4 percent; American Indian students, 34.8 percent; Hispanic students, 27.7 percent; and African American students, 26.1 percent. (November 2006)

Tenth-Grade WASL in Spring 2006: Associations Among Subject Areas. Statistical associations among reading, writing, and math WASL results are strong even though more 10th graders met standard in reading and writing than in math. Overall met-standard rates are driven primarily by math results. (November 2006)

Tenth-Grade WASL Strands: Student Performance Varies Considerably Over Time. The percentage of students who are proficient in reading and math strands varies considerably over time. Strand-level results in reading and math are based on a relatively small subset of items and are therefore less reliable than overall reading and math WASL results. Strand results on the writing WASL do not have the same degree of variation as in reading and math. (November 2006)

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[1] SSB 6618 and ESSB 6386, Laws of 2006

[2] The WASL-DAW, which allowed students in special education to take a WASL for the grade level that most closely matched their developmental or instructional level, is no longer authorized as an alternate assessment option in Washington. See http://www.k12.wa.us/BulletinsMemos/memos2006/M043-06.doc for more information.

Tenth-Grade WASL in Spring 2006: Open-Ended and Multiple-Choice Questions. Open-ended and multiple-choice WASL item results are strongly correlated, especially in math. Students who do well on multiple-choice questions typically do well on open-ended questions, and vice versa. (November 2006)

Summer 2006 Promoting Academic Success Program: Influence on WASL Retake Scores. Of 10th-grade students who did not meet standard on the WASL in spring 2006, 13.9 percent participated in a Promoting Academic Success (PAS) program the following summer. Compared with students who did not participate in a PAS program in summer 2006, participants did slightly better in writing and math but not reading. (December 2006)

Textbook Alignment With Washington State Learning Standards: Summary of OSPI's Review. This report summarizes results from a data analysis of reading and mathematics textbooks in Washington. Textbook alignment with Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) is less consistent across grade levels for reading than for math. (January 2007)

Tenth-Grade WASL in Spring 2006: Association Between Poverty and WASL Performance by Race/Ethnicity. Students in poverty have lower met-standard rates on the WASL than students who are not in poverty. For reading and writing, poverty is a much stronger predictor of WASL performance than is race/ethnicity. For math, the relative impact of poverty and race/ethnicity on WASL performance is roughly equivalent. (January 2007)

Tenth-Grade WASL in Spring 2006: Relative Strength of Associations Between Student Characteristics and Met-Standard Rates. This analysis identifies four student demographic characteristics that are strongly or moderately associated with met-standard rates: enrollment in special education, parents' educational attainment, poverty, and non-English speaker. Two performance-oriented characteristics are also associated with WASL performance: students' educational aspirations and time spent on homework. (January 2007)

Tenth-Grade WASL in Spring 2006: How Individual Student Characteristics Are Associated With Performance. A student's grade point average (GPA) is most strongly associated with WASL performance. Groups of students with low met-standard rates have one or more of the following characteristics in common: minority status, poverty, non-English speaker, enrollment in special education, parent with less than a high school education, GPA below 2.5, behind grade level, poor school attendance, poor study habits, and/or no aspirations for postsecondary education. Groups of students with high met-standard rates include: GPA over 3.5, participation in a gifted/highly capable program, and/or parent who attended post-graduate school. (February 2007)

Alternative Assessment Options for High School Graduation: Interim Report. This report reviews assessment options used as alternatives to state high school exit exams. Standardized tests and grade-based options are relatively inexpensive and easy to implement, but have low potential to increase met-standard rates. Performance-based assessments such as Washington's Collection of Evidence have higher potential to increase met-standard rates but are complex and costly to implement. Diagnostic exams may be a relatively less costly option with a potential to improve students' academic performance. (February 2007)

Who Has and Has Not Yet Completed the 10th-Grade WASL? To date, 13.9 percent of students in the class of 2008 have not yet completed all three subject areas on the WASL. Grade point average has the strongest association with WASL completion rates (students with higher GPAs are more likely to have completed the exam). Overall, similar combinations of student characteristics are associated with completion and met-standard rates. In other words, without some form of intervention, many non-completers would not have met standard if they had taken the WASL. (February 2007)

Promoting Academic Success Program: Summer 2006 Instructor Survey Results. This report presents results of a survey administered to summer 2006 PAS instructors about the different instructional strategies offered in PAS classes. (February 2007)

WASL Performance in Grades 4, 7, and 10. Overall, met-standard rates in reading, writing, and math have increased for each grade level over time. Met-standard rates in reading and math are highest on the 4th-grade WASL and lowest on the 7th-grade WASL in most years. Met-standard rates in writing are more comparable across grade levels. (March 2007)