

WA State Assessment System

Statutory and/or Budget Language

\$26,975,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024, \$26,975,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025, \$1,350,000 of the education legacy trust account—state appropriation, and \$15,868,000 of the general fund—federal appropriation are provided solely for development and implementation of the Washington state assessment system.

Purpose

The program is to develop and administer a statewide assessment system to the requisite student population in the state of Washington. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), requires states to have a set of high-quality student academic assessments to measure the achievement of all students in the state. Currently, annual assessments for accountability purposes include:

- English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics in grades 3–8 and one grade in high school
- Science in grades 5, 8, and one grade of high school

Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are also assessed each year in the same grades and content areas.

Description of Services Provided

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in conjunction with contractors provide the following services:

- Implements activities to develop items/tasks and assessments aligned to the existing learning standards/English language development (ELD) standards.
- Designs and delivers online assessments and other accommodated formats.
- Outlines procedures for administration of the tests, including delivery and return of all test materials.
- Facilitates scoring of all student work.
- Manages the processing of data for the purposes of performance reporting.

Alternate assessments are provided for students having the most significant cognitive disabilities identified in their Individualized Education Program (IEP).



Criteria for Receiving Services and/or Grants

All public schools and districts must participate in the state assessment system so that Washington has comprehensive information about student progress, learning acceleration, and opportunity gaps.

Beneficiaries in the 2023-24 School Year

Number of School Districts	All
Number of Schools	All
Number of Students	All
Number of Educators	All
Other	N/A

Are Federal or Other Funds Contingent on State Funding?

Yes. ESEA Title 1 federal funds are linked to the state implementation of an assessment program; the financial responsibility for the program is a shared expense with the state.

State Funding History

031 – WA State Assessment System

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2024	\$26,975,000	\$20,905,524
2023	\$26,975,000	\$19,882,354
2022	\$26,975,000	\$26,965,682
2021	\$26,975,000	\$23,594,652
2020	\$26,975,000	\$19,967,775

JK0 – Ed Legacy Trust Account - WA Assessment System

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2024	\$675,000	\$819,747
2023	\$675,000	\$675,000
2022	\$675,000	\$0
2021	\$675,000	\$675,000
2020	\$675,000	\$675,000

400 – Federal - WA Assessment System

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2024	\$7,934,000	\$7,600,087
2023	\$7,934,000	\$6,828,333
2022	\$7,934,000	\$7,584,160
2021	\$7,934,000	\$4,980,415
2020	\$7,934,000	\$7,214,202

Number of Beneficiaries Per Fiscal Year (e.g. School Districts, Schools, Students, Educators, Other)

031 – WA State Assessment System

Fiscal Year	Number of Beneficiaries
2024	All
2023	All
2022	All
2021	All
2020	All

JK0 – Ed Legacy Trust Account - WA Assessment System

Fiscal Year	Number of Beneficiaries
2024	All
2023	All
2022	All
2021	All
2020	All

400 – Federal - WA Assessment System

Fiscal Year	Number of Beneficiaries
2024	All
2023	All
2022	All
2021	All
2020	All

Programmatic Changes Since Inception (If Any)

- **English language arts and mathematics.** In the years 1997, 1998, and 1999, Washington began assessing students in the content areas of reading, writing, and mathematics in grades 4, 7, and 10 successively. In 2006, as a result of the No Child Left Behind, Washington began assessing students in reading and mathematics at grades 3, 5, 6, and 8.
- Over the past dozen years, state assessments have undergone various modifications in program implementation. The list of modifications includes:
 - Moving to online administration rather than paper and pencil
 - Adopting new learning standards (college & career readiness)
 - An aligned assessment (Smarter Balanced) that is computer-adaptive
 - Inclusion of interim assessments and resources for teachers (originally the *Digital Library* followed by *Tools for Teachers*)
 - Quicker return of student score results (less than three weeks after testing rather than at the start of the next school year)
 - High school testing moved to grade 11 in 2015 and returned to grade 10 in 2018.

- Between 2011 and 2014, the high school mathematics assessment measured end-of-course (EOC) knowledge in the content areas of Algebra and Geometry but returned to a comprehensive assessment in 2015.
- Starting with the spring 2022 test administration, Washington used the Smarter Balanced adjusted test blueprints for math and English language arts testing. These adjusted test blueprints reduce test-taking time by about one-third while maintaining high reliability for individual student results. Despite being shorter, the item and test experience for students is proportional to the full blueprint used in Spring 2019 and before and relies on an adaptive test delivery algorithm.
- Beginning in spring 2024, the test window was extended statewide to allow for greater flexibility.
- **Science.** In 2004, the state added science in grades 8 and 10, followed by grade 5 beginning in 2005. The science learning standards underwent two subsequent adoptions, first in 2009 and most recently the 2013 adoption, the *Washington State 2013 K–12 Science Learning Standards* (based on Next Generation Science Standards or NGSS). Science assessments were delivered in paper & pencil formats at all three grade levels from 2004 through 2017 and moved to an online administration at all three grade levels in 2018. Between 2012 and 2017, the high school science assessment measured end-of-course (EOC) knowledge in the content area of Biology but returned to a comprehensive assessment measuring the breadth of the NGSS learning standards in 2018.
- **Alternate assessment.** Consistent with legislation, states can develop and administer an alternate assessment designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The state adopted a portfolio design and administered it from 2001 through the 2014 administration. Improvements over this period were focused on the following:
 - Expanding access for students with limited capacity in engaging with the assessment
 - More robust standards extensions to aid a wider breadth of student demonstration
 - Modifications to data collection to reduce burdens on teachers while establishing greater alignment to grade-level learning standards
 - Adding performance skill points that are evaluated (scored)
- In 2015, a new alternate assessment, the *Washington Access to Instruction & Measurement (WA-AIM)*, was implemented that modified the design to better align with the adopted college and career readiness learning standards in grades 3–8 and 10 for ELA and math. In the school year 2017–18, the WA-AIM assessment shifted the science portions (grades 5, 8, and 11) to the *Washington State 2013 K–12 Science Learning Standards*.)
- WA-AIM is designed as a performance-based assessment of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Each content area is assessed against five learning standards, using pre-engagement exposure to the assessable standards to establish the appropriate level of complexity to use with students. Based on the student’s success with the pre-engagement activity, the annual measure will be given later in the year at the original selected access point or the next higher version for the standard. The annual administration becomes the measure of the student’s learning for the academic year.

Program Evaluation or Evaluation of Major Findings

Washington administered a set of high-quality student academic assessments to measure the progress, learning acceleration, and opportunity gaps of all students in the state. Washington continued to use the Smarter Balanced adjusted blueprint in spring 2024 to reduce testing time.

The data from the spring 2024 test administration indicates that students are continuing a strong recovery in math and the need for a continued focus on literacy. Identifying overall trends help influence policy priorities and investments in targeted resources to support student learning.

In spring 2024 OSPI also conducted desk test monitoring of 21 districts. Based on feedback OSPI implemented several modifications to the guidance provided to districts for the spring 2024 assessment administration. These changes included:

- Consolidating security reports to reduce the number of reports districts need to submit to OSPI from five to three.
- Extending the deadline for submitting these reports.
- Revised sections of the OSPI's professional guidelines for assessment and the Test Coordinators Manual to improve clarity, simplify, and ensure consistency.

In collaboration with the U.S Department of Education and Peer Review, assessment consortia, contracted service providers, and national and state assessment technical advisory committees, OSPI continues evaluating the assessment program for quality and efficiency.

Student performance at the statewide, district, and school levels has been posted to the [Washington State Report Card](#) website.

Major Challenges Faced by the Program

OSPI, in collaboration with the Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC), will continue to provide guidance to avoid the misinterpretation of what the results of these tests mean. The test results for students who do not meet the college readiness proficiency standard are not necessarily below grade level in their knowledge. OSPI's [September 2024 press release](#) reminds families, policymakers, and community members to avoid viewing state assessment scores as the primary indicator of student learning and growth. Engagement, attendance, grades, and classroom-based assignments and tests provide more detailed, timely, and useful information about individual students' progress to their families and educators.

Maintaining a high-quality and cost-effective assessment system continues as the focus of state consideration. It is challenging for a summative assessment to meet the multiple purposes that are demanded of it (system accountability, individual student achievement and growth, informing instruction, and others).

One trade-off to the shorter assessments is that sub-scores (called “claims”) are not available for individual student results. OSPI is seeking alternate ways to provide more information about student learning.

Future Opportunities

- As state law requires ([RCW 28A.655.070](#)), OSPI develops the state’s learning standards and periodically revises them based on the student learning goals in [RCW 28A.150.210](#). OSPI launched the [Washington State Learning Standards Review project](#) in 2023. After adopting new or revised state learning standards, an evaluation of alignment to the state assessment will be conducted.
- As part of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), OSPI is required to develop and implement a formal monitoring plan that provides the agency feedback on district and school assessment administration procedures. OSPI plans to continue virtual desk monitoring during the 2024–25 school year. Specific dates will be determined in spring 2025 based on school districts availability. OSPI’s five-year monitoring cycle through 2027 is available on the [Monitoring of State Assessments](#) website.
- Districts currently receive electronic student score reports and, upon request, paper versions to be shared with families. OSPI is transitioning towards 100% online reporting when feasible, saving on printing and shipping costs.
- In Fall of 2022 OSPI began a 21-month long Request for Proposal process culminating in two new assessment contracts, one for ELA, math, and science and the other for the alternate assessment. Under the new contract, students’ ELA, math, and science tests will be scored using a hybrid automated model beginning with the spring 2025 test administration. Implementing the hybrid model, supported by highly trained human judgement, ensures consistent score application within and across test administration, provides quicker return of scores and feedback to educators and students, lowers costs to the state, gives Washington flexibility to adjust the parameters of the scoring engine, and the ability to hand score student responses when necessary. The alternate assessment will continue to be hand scored.

Other Relevant Information

See [Washington State Report Card](#)

Schools/Districts Receiving Assistance

[Click here to see a list of all OSPI grant recipients in the 2024 Fiscal Year.](#)

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