

State Testing 2010

What You Need to Know

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Every spring, the state tests all students in grades 3-8 and 10 to make sure their learning is on track. The results from this testing are important to us all.



Beginning in the 2009-10 school year, the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) will be replaced by two new tests: the **Measurements of Student Progress** (MSP) in grades 3-8 and the **High School Proficiency Exam** (HSPE). In addition, the MSP will be piloted online in spring 2010 in grades 6-8 in reading and math.

The two new tests were named to convey their specific goals.

The MSP, given in grades 3-8, *measures student progress*. While the MSP results are important, state testing should never be the sole judge of a student's academic skills and knowledge. A student's entire academic performance should always be considered.

The HSPE ensures that high school students *are proficient*, or have the basic skills necessary to move on to the next steps in their life. Those tests are aligned to graduation requirements, which remain in effect. If a student has already passed one or more sections of the high school WASL, they will not be required to take the new HSPE in the same content area(s).

To be eligible to graduate, high school students must pass the reading and writing state exams, a state-approved alternative or an assessment for students in special education AND pass the state math exam or earn two math credits after 10th grade.

If you have questions or concerns about your child's learning, please contact your child's teacher or school. To learn more about the state's testing system, please visit www.WAtesting.com.

Who Gets Tested and When?

The federal No Child Left Behind Act requires yearly testing of students in grades 3-8 and 10 in reading and math, and in three grades in science (grades 5, 8 and 10 in Washington). Our state also tests students in writing (grades 4, 7 and 10).

Grade	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
Reading	✓	✓	✓●	✓■	✓■	✓■	9th grade testing is no longer available due to budget cuts.	✓●	Necessary only if student has not met state assessment graduation requirement.	
Math	✓	✓	✓●	✓■	✓■	✓■		✓●		
Writing		✓			✓			✓●		
Science			✓●			✓		✓		

- Offered online in spring 2010
- Offered online in spring 2011

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State Testing and Reporting Timeline

March 16-18:	Reading and Writing HSPE
April 13 & 15:	Math HSPE; Science HSPE
May 3- June 4:	MSP testing window for grades 6-8 (online)
May 12- May 28:	MSP testing window for grades 3-8 (paper)
Mid June	HSPE Score Reports sent home for grades 10-12
By June 17:	Release of statewide HSPE results
June 8-26:	Registration period for August HSPE
August 9-12:	August HSPE testing
Mid August:	MSP/HSPE results released for all students
By mid Sept.:	All MSP/HSPE reports sent home (all grades)

What Does a MSP/HSPE Score Mean?

Students receive a score for each MSP/HSPE test taken. Scores are based on how an individual student performed, so you won't find percentiles often provided by other standardized tests. Scores fall into one of four levels:

- Level **4** **Exceeds State Standards:** Represents advanced mastery of a subject's skills and knowledge.
- Level **3** **Meets State Standards:** Represents mastery of a subject's skills and knowledge. Student knows and can analyze information and can apply knowledge and skills to real-world situations.
- Level **2** **Below State Standard:** Represents some mastery of a subject's skills and knowledge.
- Level **1** **Well-Below State Standard:** Represents little to no mastery of a subject's skills and knowledge.

Frequently Asked Questions About State Testing

Q: I heard the WASL is being replaced. Is there still state testing?

A: Yes.

Q: Why are we required to do state testing?

A: Because of state and federal law. Our state assessment system was implemented in response to the state's Education Reform Law of 1993. Our state tests also fulfill the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. NCLB requires annual assessments in reading and math for students in grades 3-8 and high school. Students also must be tested annually in science in three grade levels. Washington does this by testing students in grades 5, 8 and 10.

Q: What are the new state tests called?

A: The grades 3-8 tests are called the Measurements of Student Progress (MSP). The high school tests will be called the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE).

Q: When do the new tests take effect?

A: The Measurements of Student Progress (MSP) and the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) will first be given in spring 2010.

Q: Why are you replacing the WASL?

A: Superintendent Randy Dorn, who came into office in January 2009, believes the state assessment system should be a less complex and more responsive system of measuring student progress.

Q: What is different about these tests compared to the WASL?

A: The tests are shorter and online versions will be phased in over the next few years.

Q: What is the schedule for online testing?

A: Beginning in spring 2010, about 25 percent of students in grades 6-8 will take reading and math online. The rest of the grades will be phased in during the next few years. Visit www.WAtesting.com for more information.

The Move to Online Testing

Washington is not the first state to make the move to online testing, but it is among the leaders. The state's goal is for the majority of grades and subjects to be tested via computers in all school districts by 2012.

In spring 2010, the MSP will be offered online in grades 6-8. About 25 percent of students in those grades will test via computer next year. In spring 2011, fifth graders will test on computers in reading, math and science.

In spring 2011, high school reading, math and writing will be offered online. That's also the first year the revised K-12 math standards will be assessed in this state. The high school science exam will likely be first offered online in 2012.

In spring 2012, fourth graders will move online in reading and math. Feasibility studies are being conducted for online testing in all third-grade subjects.

Q: Doesn't shortening the tests make them easier?

A: No. The entire testing system will be much more efficient, but the tests, still based on our state learning standards, will continue to be valid and reliable.

Q: Does my son or daughter still need to pass a state test to graduate from high school?

A: Yes. No matter what the state test is called, the graduation requirements that go along with it have not changed. If a student passed one or more content areas

on the WASL, he/she would not have to take the HSPE in that specific subject. For example, a high school student in 2009 passes the reading WASL, but not the writing WASL. That student would need to take the writing HSPE but not the reading.

Q: How will the new testing system affect students receiving special education services?

A: Superintendent Randy Dorn has convened a work group to study and to recommend changes to the Washington Alternate Assessment System and other alternatives assessments for special needs students. For those students unable to test on a computer, a paper-and-pencil test will still be available.

Q: Won't replacing the tests cost more money?

A: No. We do expect some additional costs up front, but not over the life of the five-year assessment contract that went into effect in October 2008. School districts, however, should see savings in time and money in regards to administering the tests.

Q: What types of questions appear on state tests?

A: The MSP and HSPE tests are much shorter than the WASL and include multiple-choice and short-answer questions. Four-point essay questions have been eliminated on reading, math and science tests. This change allows students to show they are able to solve the problems, while not being scored on their writing ability on the math, reading and science tests.

Q: What makes our state tests different from other standardized tests?

A: The MSP and HSPE are unlike more familiar standardized tests, which measure students against other students. Our state tests measure students' performance against a set of learning standards, not against their peers. Think of the MSP/HSPE like the test you take to earn a driver's license. It doesn't matter what other drivers score, only what you scored and that you have the driving skills and knowledge to "meet the standard."



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For more information

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