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Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**  
Chris Reykdal, Superintendent

k12.wa.us

March 16, 2021

Notice to public and school districts of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI's) intent to apply to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) for a waiver of previously approved state assessment requirements for the 2020–21 and 2021–22 school years due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its ongoing and long-term impact on Washington's public schools' students and families. As most students received remote instruction for a portion of the 2020–21 school year (with many still in remote learning), the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and local districts are unable to guarantee the conditions for validly-interpreted and reliable summative assessments for all students during the COVID-19 pandemic, in a safe environment. This multi-prong waiver proposal uses the flexibility of the 95% participation rate noted in the ED letter to assess a representative sample of student groups. As noted in multiple research briefs, including a memo from Harvard's Graduate School of Education Andrew Ho, "states should view their spring efforts as an educational census rather than an educational assessment" (2021). OSPI proposes that a sample of Washington students be assessed in English Language Arts (ELA), math, and science in the spring of 2021. The use of a sampling methodology for the statewide assessments will achieve three specific goals:

1. Reducing the total number of students assessed will provide a more targeted approach to advancing educational equity by gaining valid and reliable data on student groups impacted by the disruption of COVID-19.
2. Allowing our state to position statewide assessments and accountability more appropriately in a framework that includes classroom, school, and district-based assessment systems.
3. Adapting our overall approach and footprint of our statewide assessment will free up resources, time, and supports to target and maintain our immediate focus on supporting students' social, emotional, and academic development.

Additionally, the legislature and OSPI will require that districts use a combination of locally determined assessments, student self-assessments, and communication with families to inform practices to impact student learning. This includes the following:

- Completion and approval of the required March 1st Reopening Schools Progress Report by all districts as required by newly passed legislation HB 1368. This required school districts to submit a plan for reopening school buildings for in-person learning using the current Washington State Department of Health framework prior to receiving federal funding.
- Completion of the Academic and Student Well-Being Recovery Plan to OSPI by June 1st. This was also required by HB 1368, and requires district to submit plans for addressing learning and well-being recovery for students over the summer and beyond. This will

include a complete description of grade-level assessments and diagnostic tools used by each district.

- Administration of the OSPI COVID-19 Student Survey to students in grades 6–12. Topics on the survey include remote learning experiences, physical health, COVID-19 precautions, mental health, and social supports during the pandemic.
- Administration of the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA-21) and the WIDA Alternate Access for ELL continues and will be administered by districts during an extended 19-week window beginning March 22, 2021.

OSPI is required to notify the public and all local education agencies (LEAs)/school districts of Washington state's intent to request this waiver. Districts and the public are asked to provide comment on the waiver request to OSPI. Comments from districts will be included in OSPI's request to the ED.

The public comment period opens Tuesday, March 16 and will close at 5 pm on Monday, March 22. You may submit your comments through our [public comment survey](#). This public comment survey is also available in Spanish.

In seeking this waiver, the state assures that:

- The SEA will provide the public and all LEAs in the state with notice of, and the opportunity to provide comments on this request by posting information regarding the waiver request and the process for commenting on the state website. OSPI will enclose any comments received, if any, and a description of how the SEA addressed such comments with the waiver request to the ED.

This notice can be found on the [Public Notices & Waiver Requests to the U.S. Department of Education website](#).