



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION



The Washington State
BOARD OF EDUCATION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Washington Comprehensive Assessment Program (WCAP)

2024

Authorizing Legislation: RCW 28A.300.041

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes state standardized assessments for the 2023–24 school year. It also includes a summary of the State Board of Education (SBE) activities concerning the state comprehensive assessment program and actions of the Board anticipated for school year 2024–25 as required by the [Revised Code of Washington \(RCW\) 28A.300.041](#).

The statewide assessments are one way of assessing the depth of each student’s knowledge and abilities in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science, and are one of many indicators of student learning. Overall, the spring 2024 assessment data indicates a strong recovery in mathematics and the need for continued focus in lite

racy. An analysis of assessment costs indicates existing biennial Federal and State funding to be sufficient. The actual contracted costs to deliver our state assessments in 2024 were 4.3% less than anticipated.

INTRODUCTION

On September 10, 2024, OSPI released data from the spring 2024 state assessments, [State Test Data Show Continued Recovery in Math, Focus Needed in Reading](#).

“The state tests are not Pass/Fail and students who do not meet the college readiness proficiency standard are not necessarily below grade level in their knowledge. On the tests, students demonstrate their grade-level knowledge and skills along a continuum of complexity.”

–*Superintendent Chris Reykdal*

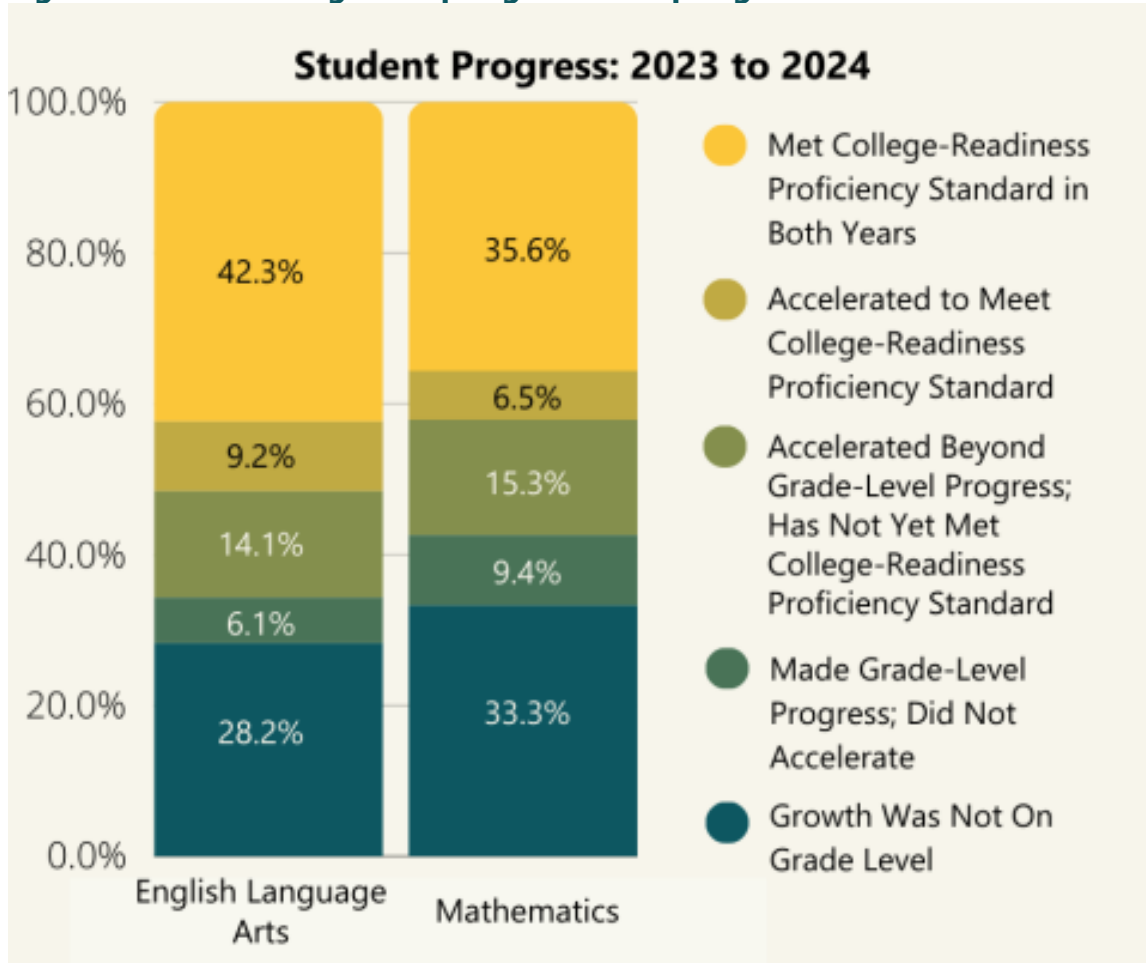
Statewide student results are posted on the [Washington State Report Card](#) each year by September 10th in accordance with [RCW 28A.655.090](#). The 2024 assessment data are summarized in Figures 1 and 2 below. This data does not include scores for students who did not take the state standardized tests. Data on students who made progress on state assessments from 2023 to 2024 are available at the state level only.

Figure 1: State Level Participation and Results

Test Administration	Test Subject	Met Standard	Participated
Smarter Balanced Assessment	ELA	50.3%	95.6%
Smarter Balanced Assessment	Math	39.7%	95.2%
Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science	Science	43.5%	87.5%
Washington Access to Instruction & Measurement	ELA Alternate	34.1%	99.8%
Washington Access to Instruction & Measurement	Math Alternate	40.5%	99.6%
Washington Access to Instruction & Measurement	Science Alternate	23.2%	98.5%
Combined	ELA	50.2%	95.7%
Combined	Math	39.7%	95.3%
Combined	Science	43.4%	87.6%

Source: Report Card Assessment Data, 8/30/2024

Figure 2: Student Progress: Spring 2023 to Spring 2024



Source: OSPI News Release, 9/10/2024

BACKGROUND

Washington's Education Reform began in the early 1990s with the passage of Substitute Senate Bill 5953. This law initiated the development of the Washington State learning standards, then known as the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs). In 2016, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), required 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 federal accountability purposes include grades 3–8 in English language arts/literacy and mathematics, grades 5 and 8 in science and one grade of high school in the same three content areas.

Along with delivering statewide assessments, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires OSPI to develop and implement a formal assessment monitoring plan that provides the agency feedback on district and school assessment administration procedures.

OSPI's goal in evaluating district implementation of assessments is to use monitoring as an opportunity to better support districts by identifying areas where additional resources, processes, and/or guidance are needed. Monitoring is not a compliance activity, and evaluations made during the process do not negatively impact the district.

Monitoring activities were fully implemented in spring 2023 and provided valuable feedback to OSPI regarding district assessment implementation. This feedback highlighted both district successes and areas requiring improvement. Furthermore, it initiated adjustments to improve OSPI's administration resources that are designed to provide better support for school districts.

Over the years, Washington has partnered with other states and national technical advisors to evaluate and implement various modifications to the assessment program such as shortened tests, transitioning from paper to online administration, increasing automated scoring, and the inclusion of interim assessments and resources for educators. Throughout the assessment program's evolution, our state standards were and continue to be the basis for student instruction and assessment. The review and adoption of updated standards for English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science have led to improved instruction and assessments.

The [state testing timeline](#) shows the history of Washington's assessments based on state academic achievement standards.

UPDATE STATUS

Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS)

WaKIDS is a three-part transition process that helps to ensure a successful start to the K–12 experience and connect the key adult in a child’s life. The three components are:

- Family Connection, which occurs through a Family Connection Meeting, is a one-on-one meeting with a child’s family/guardian to welcome them to the K–12 system.
- Early Learning Collaboration aims to foster relationships between the school system and learning providers within their school boundaries to transition children to kindergarten. This practice can create a sense of continuity for children to promote a shared understanding of kindergarten readiness, and ultimately provide a smooth transition for children and families.
- Whole-child Assessment is an authentic whole-child observational assessment of everyday activities (transitions, instruction, learning centers, etc.) conducted during the first 8–10 weeks of kindergarten. Teachers observe students across six areas of development and learning: Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, and Math.

During the 2023–24 school year, 57.9% of all 65,617 kindergarteners in Washington state met all six domains of kindergarten readiness. In alignment with 2SHB 1550, passed by the Washington State Legislature in 2023, the emergency rules established the Transition to Kindergarten program. The rules provided for the administration, allocation of state funding, and minimum standards and requirements for the Transition to Kindergarten program for the 2023–24 school year. For the 2023–24 school year only, all three components of the WaKIDS must have been administered at the beginning of the program. Additionally, it was recommended that the WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment be administered at least one more time during the school year. The permanent rules are anticipated to be effective by the 2024–25 school year.

Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) System

Washington is a member of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). Washington students and educators have access to a comprehensive suite of ELA and mathematics standards-aligned assessments and tools—including instructional supports, interim assessments, and summative assessments—to support effective teaching and maximize learning for each individual student.

Tools For Teachers

The Smarter Balanced-provided Tools for Teachers is a repository for instructional resources used to support the interim assessments. Tools for Teachers features teacher-created lessons and activities to enhance instruction and are not an assessment given to students. Embedded within these resources are formative assessment strategies that educators can use to gather information

about student learning toward the standards and performance on the summative Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBA) and interim assessments.

Smarter Balanced also provided a platform within Tools for Teachers to further support educator use of interim tests and interim items. This platform is called the Interim Assessment Item Portal (IAIP). The IAIP provided a way for educators to search for specific interims or interim questions by test or learning standard, create a paper version of interims including customizing those paper versions with questions from across different interims, and view scoring resources. Tools for Teachers and the IAIP were available to educators during the entire 2023–24 school year.

Interim Assessments

The Smarter Balanced-provided interim assessments are optional assessments local educators can use to provide actionable data about student knowledge and abilities to help teachers target instruction to meet students' individual learning needs. There are three types of interims: Interim Comprehensive Assessments (ICAs), Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs), and Focused Interim Assessment Blocks (Focused IABs).

In the school year 2023–24, interim assessments were available from October 2nd through the end of the school year. Interim assessments were available to administer to students both in person and remotely. There were 45,370 students who were administered ICAs and 716,805 students who were administered IABs and Focused IABs. For students who completed interim assessments, schools had access to individual results and score reports, student responses to interim questions, and group-level summary reports.

Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA)

SBA is a summative assessment measuring students' progress toward college and career readiness in ELA and mathematics for grades 3–8 and 10 as described in the [Washington Learning Standards for English Language Arts](#) and the [Mathematics K–12 Learning Standards](#). The summative assessments are typically given toward the end of the school year, have four levels of performance, and consist of two online parts: a computer adaptive test (CAT) and a performance task. Results for spring 2024 are available on the [Washington State Report Card](#).

The spring 2024 Smarter Balanced ELA and mathematics online test administration windows were extended by two weeks as compared to previous administrations to provide greater flexibility to districts. This updated timeline was communicated on the [OSPI Timelines & Calendar](#) website as well as distributed in the weekly assessment newsletter. The online SBA test window was March 4 to June 28, 2024. This assessment was also offered in an accommodated paper-pencil format from April 8–May 17, 2024. The SBA is an untimed test; students are allowed as much time as needed. The test design used in spring 2022 through 2024 was the adjusted blueprint developed by Smarter Balanced. The adjusted blueprint includes about 50% fewer CAT items and the same number of performance tasks (one). As a result, the estimated testing times for most students were cut in half. There were both machine-scored and human-reader scored questions. During the 2023–24 school year, 560,774 students were expected to take the SBA ELA and 561,682 were expected to

take the SBA mathematics assessments. Both ELA and Mathematics saw participation rates over 95%.

Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science (WCAS)

The Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science (WCAS) is a summative assessment measuring the level of science proficiency that Washington students have achieved based on the [Washington State K–12 Science Learning Standards](#) in grades 5, 8, and 11. The tests are given toward the end of the school year, are composed of item clusters and standalone questions, and have four levels of performance.

The WCAS spring 2024 online and paper-pencil windows opened on Monday, April 8. The accommodated paper-pencil window closed on May 27, 2024, and the online window closed on June 7, 2024. The spring 2024 test continues to use the full-length design. During the 2023–24 school year, 245,962 students were expected to take the WCAS. The WCAS participation rate was over 87%.

Washington Access to Instruction and Measurement (WA-AIM)

The WA-AIM assessment is the state alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS) for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The assessment measures student knowledge and skills in the content areas of English language arts and mathematics at grades 3–8 and 10 and in science at grades 5, 8, and 11. Learning standards for this assessment are reduced in depth, breadth, and complexity.

The 2023–24 WA-AIM administration window opened on January 29 and closed May 3, 2024. While the administration window is a set timeframe, the item and form content used in the assessment is available throughout the school for instructional purposes. During the 2023–24 school year, the following students were expected to take the WA-AIM:

- 5,343 in ELA WA-AIM
- 5,348 in mathematics WA-AIM
- 2,061 in science WA-AIM

Participation rates in all three content areas exceeded 98%.

WIDA ACCESS

WIDA is the annual assessment for multilingual English learners providing information on whether students are making progress toward proficiency, as well as determining continued eligibility for English language development (ELD) services. The state also administers a screener to potential multilingual students within ten days of registering in a Washington school to determine initial eligibility for ELD services as required by RCW 28A.180.090. WIDA tests four domains of language (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) with six levels of performance in each domain.

WIDA administration window opened on January 29 and closed on March 22, 2024. In the 2023–24 school year, 143,250 multilingual English learners were tested which resulted in 8.43% of those students exiting program services. The exit criteria for ELD services were updated in 2024. Students without test scores, or with incomplete test scores, will continue receiving ELD services until they receive scores from their next annual assessment.

WIDA Alternate ACCESS

WIDA Alternate ACCESS is the complement for measuring English language proficiency for multilingual English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The WIDA Alternate ACCESS administration window was the same as the WIDA ACCESS assessment. In the 2023–24 school year, 2596 students participated in the WIDA Alternate ACCESS administration.

State Assessment Data System Components

Another component supporting the state assessment system is the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS), a longitudinal data warehouse of educational data. Each year OSPI uses CEDARS and accompanying databases to collect data that supports state-required statewide assessment and associated administration. These data are used for accountability and to monitor overall student achievement.

Other 2023–24 Assessment Related Activities

During the 2023–24 testing window the OSPI assessment team conducted formal monitoring activities across 21 school districts. Based on what we learned, OSPI implemented several modifications to the guidance provided to districts for the spring 2024 assessment administration. These changes included consolidating the number of security reports submitted to OSPI from five to three and extending the deadline for submitting these reports. Sections of OSPI’s professional guidelines for assessment and the Test Coordinators Manual were also rewritten to improve clarity, simplify, and ensure consistency.

Additionally, OSPI updated documents for the 2024 monitoring activity to facilitate a more productive conversation. Emphasizing the iterative nature of the process, OSPI supports the formal annual assessment monitoring activity as a means of continually refining and improving guidance and processes for a more secure and effective assessment program.

Cost Summary

The state’s contracted cost per student to administer Smarter Balanced and WCAS for the 2023–24 school year, was approximately \$29 and \$16 respectively. Approximately 19% of the 2024 assessment costs, inclusive of operating expenses, were funded by the state’s federal assessment formula grant with the remaining balance funded by state appropriated funds.

Some testing costs associated with the 2023–24 school year are split across both the 2024 and 2025 fiscal years. To account for the reporting activities which take place after the close of the 2024 fiscal year, Figure 3 below provides the anticipated and actual contracted costs to administer, score, and report the 2023–24 tests.

The following factors attributed to the 2023–24 cost savings:

- Eliminating in-person advisory meetings
- Reduction in science development work
- Fewer paper tested students

Figure 3: 2023–24 Contracted Cost Summary

Assessment	Anticipated Costs	Actual Costs
WaKIDS	\$1,328,987	\$1,328,832
SBA	\$16,368,939	\$16,340,182
WCAS	\$3,823,931	\$3,257,191
WA-AIM	\$1,922,349	\$1,895,099
WIDA ACCESS & WIDA Alt ACCESS	\$5,296,884	\$4,737,092
TOTAL	\$28,741,090	\$27,558,396

Sources: Enterprise Contracts Management System & Agency Financial Reporting System Expenditure Report, 8/21/2024

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION'S ACTIVITIES AND ROLE IN THE STATE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Introduction

This section of the report summarizes the activities of the State Board of Education (SBE) concerning the state assessment system in 2024. RCW 28A.300.042 states that annually “the superintendent and state board shall jointly report to the legislature regarding the assessment system.”

Statute directs Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to consult with State Board of Education in the development and maintenance of the statewide academic assessment system in reading, writing, mathematics, and science (RCW 28A.655.070(3)(a)). The Board also identifies the scores students must achieve to demonstrate meeting standard on statewide assessments, and to demonstrate career and college readiness using the SAT and ACT (RCW 28A.305.130(5)(b)(i)). Furthermore, SBE sets scores for graduation on certain assessment graduation pathway options such as the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) (RCW 28A.230.710), and scores for students to earn credit on the General Education Development (GED) high school equivalency test and world language and American Sign language proficiency tests (RCW 28A.320.192(9)).

Major areas of Board work that involve the assessment system includes graduation requirements, particularly graduation pathway options, and the system of accountability and school recognition.

Activities of the Board in 2024

The main activities of the Board concerning the assessment system included:

- Rulemaking to implement House Bill 1308 (RCW 28A.230.710), SBE request legislation establishing a performance-based graduation pathway option, which involves a non-standardized assessment of the student’s post-secondary readiness in English language arts and math.
 - Per RCW 28A.230.710, developed the [performance-based pathway implementation tools](#) (including selecting the focus standards and developing associated rubrics, task models, student checklists, and training videos for educators), in collaboration with OSPI content experts.
- Began review of graduation requirements, including graduation pathway options that rely on assessments, through the Board’s [FutureReady](#) strategic plan initiative to update graduation requirements.
- Ongoing review of the state accountability and school recognition processes.

- Ongoing support for expanding Washington’s capacity to offer mastery-based learning and mastery-based crediting opportunities, including the [Mastery-based Learning Collaborative](#) grant program.
- Appendix B, Figure 5 of [2022 WCAP legislative report](#) lists tests used for graduation and summarizes changes to the tests over time. There were no changes to scores in 2023–24, current proficiency scores may be found on the [SBE website](#).

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

OSPI and SBE maintain a strong commitment to equity, high expectations, and high academic achievement for all students. The Washington Comprehensive Assessment Program provides information on students' learning and growth as they move through the public education system.

The 2023–24 state testing occurred as scheduled beginning as early as the first two months of the school year for our kindergarteners and culminating on June 28, 2024. Overall, Washington students demonstrated continued recovery in mathematics and a need for a continued focus on literacy. Testing concluded at the end of the 2023–24 school year with a combined participation rate of over 95% in ELA and mathematics and over 87% in science.

The state's obligated contract costs for test administration for the 2023–24 school year were approximately \$1.2 million less than anticipated.

Anticipated Activities for OSPI in 2025 and beyond

- OSPI will continue to offer an extended testing window for Smarter Balance ELA and math in the upcoming school year. The 2024–25 test windows, for each statewide assessment, are available on the OSPI [State Testing Timelines & Calendar](#) website.
- OSPI plans to continue monitoring school districts during the 2024–25 test windows. Specific dates have not been finalized.
- OSPI plans to establish exit criteria for the WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessment.
- OSPI will revisit the WIDA ACCESS exit criteria and screener eligibility criteria in the future, along with test results and other data, to ensure appropriate identification.
- Districts currently receive electronic student score reports and, upon request, paper versions to be shared with families. OSPI is transitioning towards 100% on-line reporting when feasible, saving on printing and shipping costs.
- Beginning with the spring 2025 Smarter Balanced ELA, mathematics, and WCAS administration, Washington will integrate machine-scoring with human-reader scoring of all text-based student responses. This hybrid approach will provide faster turnaround times, consistent score application, optimize resources, collect stronger validity evidence, and result in a \$3M cost savings over the next three years.
- OSPI launched the [Washington State Learning Standards review project](#) to establish a periodic review process, refine and prioritize learning standards, develop guidance, and to develop a two-to-five-year implementation plan for educators. A timeline related to adoption and implementation for transitional support to school districts can be found on the [Washington State Learning Standards review project](#) website. The assessments will be reviewed after adoption of the revised learning standards to determine what changes are necessary for alignment.

Anticipated Activities of the SBE in 2025

- As part of our [2024–28 strategic plan](#), the Board is:
 - Exploring ways to enhance the accountability framework by expanding the scope of system health indicators to include conditions for learning, such as resources and school climate. The aim is to provide a clearer picture of our learning environments and support continuous improvement in K–12 education.
 - Launching FutureReady, the Board’s multi-year strategic plan initiative aimed at updating graduation requirements to better prepare students for the future. This includes a comprehensive examination of all three components of state graduation requirements:
 - 1) high school and beyond plan,
 - 2) credit and subject area requirements, and
 - 3) graduation pathway options.
 - Developing a more equitable school and district recognition system: Revising recognition criteria, incorporating community feedback, and sharing best practices for equitable education.
- Home school parents are responsible for their student annually taking a standardized test (or an annual assessment of student progress) to help ensure the student is making adequate progress (RCW 28A.200.010 and WAC 180-52-070). The Board provides a list of examples of approved standardized achievement tests that home school parents may use, however, the current list is out of date and needs to be updated to include current assessments such as the Smarter Balanced Assessment.
- Ongoing joint guidance with OSPI regarding implementation support for the performance-based pathway.
- If needed, potential update of [performance-based pathway implementation tools](#) (including focus standards, rubrics, and task models) after OSPI completes the learning standards revision (per WAC 180-51-230(7)(f)(iii)(B)).

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