



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION



The Washington State
BOARD OF EDUCATION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Washington Comprehensive Assessment Program (WCAP) 2025

Authorizing Legislation: RCW 28A.300.041

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes state standardized assessments for the 2024–25 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 2025–26 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 2025 assessment data show that students are continuing to recover from the pandemic, with math scores improving across all grade levels and English language arts scores rising in most grades while still having opportunity and achievement gaps for many student groups. OSPI continues to leverage financial and human resources to equitably steward federal and state resources. An analysis of assessment costs shows that current biennial state and federal funding is sufficient. In 2025, the actual contracted costs for administering state assessments were 3% below projections for 2025 and 10% lower than the actual contracted costs in 2024.

INTRODUCTION

On September 10, 2025, OSPI released data from the spring 2025 state assessments, [State Test Scores Show Continued Improvement in Math and English Language Arts](#).

"Among the 11 other states using the same state test vendor as we do, our students have the second-highest performance in ELA and the fourth-highest performance in math. At the same time, we have gaps to close."

—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 spring 2025 state level assessment data are summarized in Table 1 below. Students scoring a level 2 or above indicate foundational grade-level knowledge. Participation percent is the sum of students scoring at levels 1, 2, 3, and 4, divided by the number of students expected to test. Participation percent for alternate assessments is the percentage of students registered to take the alternate assessment and earned a score.

Table 1: State Level Performance and Participation

Test Administration	Test Subject	Levels 2, 3, 4	Participation
Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA)	ELA	70.9%	95.8%
Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA)	Math	63.3%	95.4%
Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science (WCAS)	Science	62.6%	87.6%
Washington Access to Instruction & Measurement (WA-AIM)	ELA Alternate	68.8%	99.9%
Washington Access to Instruction & Measurement (WA-AIM)	Math Alternate	80.0%	99.7%
Washington Access to Instruction & Measurement (WA-AIM)	Science Alternate	58.7%	98.5%

Source: Report Card Assessment Data, September 10, 2025

BACKGROUND

Washington's education reform began in the early 1990s with the passage of Substitute Senate Bill 5953. This law established the foundation of Washington's 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. Washington's current annual assessment requirements for federal accountability purposes include:

- English language arts/literacy and mathematics in grades 3–8,
- Science in grades 5, 8, and,
- One grade of high school in the same three content areas.

Beginning with the 2007–08 school year, funding for voluntary all-day kindergarten programs were phased in. As early as the 2011–12 school year as part of state-funded, all-day kindergarten, the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) was legislatively mandated under RCW 28A.150.315 and RCW 28A.655.080.

Effective July 29, 2024, OSPI published permanent rules consistent with the criteria identified in House Bill 1550 as passed by the legislature to assist eligible children in need of additional preparation to be successful in kindergarten by establishing the transition to kindergarten program. Under Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 392-425-055, the WaKIDS Whole-Child Assessment must be administered at the beginning of the program and at least once more during the school year.

In addition to delivering statewide assessments, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires OSPI to implement a formal assessment monitoring plan to evaluate district and school assessment practices. OSPI's goal is to use monitoring to strengthen district support by identifying where additional resources, processes, or guidance are needed.

Monitoring activities were fully implemented in spring 2023 and provided valuable feedback on district implementation, highlighting both successes and areas for improvement. This feedback has guided enhancements to OSPI's assessment administration resources to better support districts.

The U.S. Department of Education reviews statewide assessment systems through an evidence-based peer review process. Washington has submitted evidence through multiple iterations to demonstrate that the Washington Comprehensive Assessment Program meets the established criteria. As of July 2025, the U.S. Department of Education recognizes Washington's assessment program as substantially meeting ESEA requirements.

Beyond our federal collaboration, 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.

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 earning 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 2024–25 school year, 53.6% of all 70,343 kindergarteners in Washington state met all six domains of kindergarten readiness.

On February 5, 2025 OSPI published the [Transition to Kindergarten: Minimum Standards and Requirements](#) guidance to support districts with planning and implementing age-appropriate Transition to Kindergarten (TK) programs at the district as well as [TK data](#) showing that TK is an effective strategy for closing opportunity gaps.

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 support, 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 feature 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 allows 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 2024–25 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 (FIABs). The ICAs are similar to the SBA summative but contain more questions, and consist of two online parts: a computer adaptive test (CAT) and a performance task (PT). "The ICAs, IABs, and FIABs draw from the same bank of interim items and performance tasks. Test questions are developed using the same rigorous methods as those items found on the summative assessment" (The Regents, 2025, p 2; [2025–26 Interim Assessments Overview](#)).

In the school year 2024–25, interim assessments were available from September 16 through the end of the school year. Interim assessments were available to administer to students both in person and remotely. 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. Tables 2 and 3 shows the number of interim tests completed by grade for the 2024–25 school year.

Table 2: ICA Tests Complete by Content, Test, and Grade

Content & Test	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	High School
ELA CAT	3,584	2,299	2,143	931	552	728	1,302
ELA PT	3,295	3,006	2,127	1,122	503	306	1,193
Math CAT	3,872	3,110	2,896	1,242	1,426	1,288	2,965
Math PT	3,527	2,812	2,307	1,000	1,416	1,151	2,527

Source: SY24–25 Interim Test completion Dashboard, June 30, 2025.

Table 3: IAB and FIAB Completed by Content and Grade

Content	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	High School
ELA	89,439	68,161	64,414	33,118	28,003	30,023	35,976
Math	118,938	94,623	87,540	54,218	43,084	49,022	39,082

Source: SY24–25 Interim Test completion Dashboard, June 30, 2025.

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 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 (PT). Results for spring 2025 are available on the [Washington State Report Card](#).

The spring 2025 Smarter Balanced ELA and mathematics test administration windows were communicated on the [OSPI Timelines & Calendar](#) website as well as distributed to districts in the weekly assessment newsletter. The online SBA test window was from March 3 to June 27, 2025. This assessment was also offered in an accommodated paper-pencil format from April 5 to May 16, 2025. The SBA is an untimed test; students are allowed as much time as needed. The test design used in spring 2022 through 2025 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 2024–25 school year, 565,132 students were expected to take the SBA ELA assessment and 565,688 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 2025 online and paper-pencil windows opened on April 7, 2025. The online window closed on June 6, 2025; whereas, the accommodated paper-pencil window closed earlier on May 16, 2025, to allow time for scoring. The spring 2025 test continues to use the full-length design. During

the 2024–25 school year, 247,923 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 2024–25 WA-AIM administration window opened on January 27, 2025, and closed May 2, 2025. 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 2024–25 school year, the following students were expected to take the WA-AIM:

- 5,800 in ELA WA-AIM
- 5,793 in mathematics WA-AIM
- 2,207 in science WA-AIM

Participation rates in all three content areas exceeded 98%.

WIDA ACCESS

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

The WIDA ACCESS test administration window opened on January 27, 2025, and closed on March 21, 2025. In the 2024–25 school year, 159,383 students were tested which resulted in 8.75% of those students exiting ELD services.

WIDA Alternate ACCESS

The WIDA Alternate ACCESS is the alternate assessment for measuring the English language proficiency of MLs with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The WIDA Alternate ACCESS administration window was the same as the WIDA ACCESS assessment. In the 2024–25 school year, 2857 students participated in the WIDA Alternate ACCESS administration and resulted in 8.75% of those students exiting ELD services. The criteria to exit ELD services was updated in 2025. With the

WIDA ACCESS, students without test scores, or with incomplete test scores, will continue receiving ELD services until they meet the updated exit criteria.

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, monitor overall student achievement and to provide information for policymaking at the state, local, and federal levels. The collected data and reports are available on the OSPI [Data & Reporting](#) website.

Other 2024–25 Assessment Related Activities

Washington integrated advanced technology with expert human review of most text-based student responses during the spring 2025 administration of the Smarter Balanced ELA, mathematics and WCAS assessments. This hybrid automated scoring approach provided faster turnaround times, consistent score application, optimized resources, collected stronger validity evidence, and resulted in more than \$796,000 cost savings for the year.

During the 2024–25 testing window the OSPI assessment team conducted formal desk monitoring activities across 18 school districts. This monitoring is federally required by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Based on what we learned, OSPI implemented several modifications to the guidance provided to districts for the spring 2026 assessment administration.

Cost Summary

Through a competitive procurement process, Request for Proposal 2024-25, OSPI successfully lowered the state's overall assessment contracting obligations by 11%. As a result, the contracted per-student cost to administer Smarter Balanced and WCAS assessments in the 2024–25 school year decreased to approximately \$17 and \$11, respectively. Approximately 20% of the 2025 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 2024–25 school year are split across both the 2025 and 2026 fiscal years. To account for the reporting activities which take place after the close of the 2025 fiscal year, Table 4 below provides the total contract obligation and actual contractor payments to administer, score, and report the 2024–25 tests.

The following factors attributed to the 2024–25 cost savings:

- Eliminating in-person advisory and development meetings
- Reducing science development activities
- Fewer paper tests administered

Table 4: School Year 2024–25 Contracted Cost Summary

Assessment	Contract Obligation	Contract Payments
WaKIDS	\$1,337,826	1,337,826
SBA	\$14,737,491	\$14,485,692
WCAS	\$2,623,176	\$2,380,190
WA-AIM	\$1,895,178	\$1,784,572
WIDA ACCESS & WIDA Alt ACCESS	\$5,056,482	\$4,937,640
TOTAL	\$25,650,154	\$24,925,919

Sources: Enterprise Contracts Management System & Agency Financial Reporting System Expenditure Reports, 2025

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 2025. RCW 28A.300.041 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). The Board also sets threshold scores for students in or released from an institutional education facility to earn credit based on the General Education Development (GED) high school equivalency test and world language and American Sign language proficiency tests to support on-time grade level progression and graduation (RCW 28A.320.192(9)).

Major areas of Board work that involve the assessment system includes graduation requirements, particularly graduation pathway options (WAC 180-51-230) and mastery-based credit policy (WAC 180-51-051), and the system of accountability, and school recognition.

Activities of the Board in 2025

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

- Review of graduation requirements, including graduation pathway options that rely on assessments, through the Board's [FutureReady](#) strategic plan initiative to update graduation requirements to better prepare students for the future. The Board convened a cross sector [FutureReady Task Force](#) to develop recommendations for how to comprehensively update requirements. The task force, in concert with the Board, has been meeting since January and has developed a shared vision for graduation requirements, identified issues to be addressed, and has begun developing recommendations.
- 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.
- SBE, in consultation with OSPI, and the Washington Homeschool Organization (WHO), approved a revised and expanded list of recommended standardized achievement tests that

families may use to demonstrate academic progress of students engaged in home-based instruction (HBI), as outlined in WAC 180-52-070. and RCW 28A.200.010(1)(c).

- 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 2024–25, current proficiency scores may be found on the SBE [Graduation Pathway Options](#) 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 2024–25 state testing occurred as scheduled beginning as early as the first two months of the school year for our kindergarteners and culminating on June 27, 2025. Overall, the data show Washington students demonstrated continued post-pandemic recovery in both mathematics and English language arts while still having opportunity and achievement gaps for many student groups. Testing concluded at the end of the 2024–25 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 2024–25 school year were approximately \$594 thousand less than anticipated.

Anticipated Activities for OSPI in 2026 and beyond

- OSPI will continue to use an integrated hybrid automated scoring approach to score the Smarter Balanced ELA, mathematics, and WCAS assessments. This scoring approach will result in a saving of approximately \$1.7 million over the next two years.
- Beginning with the 2025–26 school year, OSPI will expand the autoscorer for Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments to include the existing scoring models for ELA brief writes and math short answer items in the item pool. Educators will still have the option to hand score student responses.
- OSPI will provide appropriate oversight of districts exceeding the federal 1% alternate assessment participation cap during the 2024–25 school year. To avoid exceeding the 1% participation threshold in future WA-AIM administration years, OSPI will begin offering virtual information sessions to support districts in reviewing data and decisions to ensure accurate identification of WA-AIM testers.
- 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 for English language development services for multilingual students. OSPI plans to continue monitoring school districts during the 2025–26 test windows, as required by ESSA. 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 continues to transition towards 100% online reporting, saving on printing and shipping costs.
- OSPI is advancing the [Washington State Learning Standards](#) project to review, refine, and prioritize learning standards, and create guidance and a two-to-five-year implementation plan for educators. A current [timeline](#) for adoption and implementation is available. Following

adoption of the revised standards, OSPI will review state assessments to implement any necessary updates.

- With the passage of House Bill 1079, OSPI will add remote testing opportunities for students enrolled in online school programs beginning with a pilot in spring 2026 with full implementation in spring 2028.
- Washington will continue collaborating with the U.S. Department of Education. In 2026–27, OSPI will submit additional monitoring and accommodation evidence to satisfy remaining peer review requirements.

Anticipated Activities of the SBE in 2026 and beyond

- The FutureReady Task Force is moving into early recommendation development this fall, with a plan to develop a legislative proposal based on recommendations in fall 2026 (in time for the 2027 legislative session). This fall the task force is also launching 5 subcommittees to support deeper work in areas requiring subject matter expertise. Additionally, the Board expects to share an interim report in December 2025 to provide an update on the FutureReady process before the 2026 legislative session.
- 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.
 - Developing a more equitable school and district recognition system: Revising recognition criteria, incorporating community feedback, and sharing best practices for equitable education.
- 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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