

STATE SUPERINTENDENT'S AWARD FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Business Rules

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Introduction

Washington State’s Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction’s (OSPI) State Superintendent’s Award for Educational Excellence (SSAEE) was introduced in 2026. The purpose of this award is to recognize schools throughout the state that are providing students with exceptional education opportunities that result in stronger than average outcomes. There are two categories for award:

- Achievement.
- Progress.

This state award coincided with the U.S. Department of Education’s discontinuation of the National Blue Ribbon Schools program.

The SSAEE is based on 11 different measures of student opportunity and outcomes (figure 1), which align with [OSPI’s Annual Snapshot on Student Opportunity and Outcomes](#). The process for identifying award-winning school districts was designed to be simple and transparent. Each measure has the same value in the selection process with two exceptions:

- Dual language access will not be included in the calculation, but school districts will receive additional acknowledgement for offering at least one dual language program.
- Dual Credit Participation (including Career and Technical Education (CTE)) and Dual Credit Participation (excluding CTE) will be combined equally into a new measure called Dual Credit Participation (Combined).

The calculation for identifying award winners requires minimal data transformation and analysis. The biggest transformation is changing rates into Z-scores. With the exception of Dual Credit Participation (Combined) and High School Level Math in 8th Grade, the calculations could be repeated using publicly available data on the [OSPI Report Card](#).

Figure 1: State Superintendent’s Award for Educational Excellence Measures

Measure	Category	Category Type	Inclusion*
Regular Attendance	Regular Attendance	Opportunity	10%
Kindergarten Readiness	Pre-Kindergarten Learning	Opportunity	10%
4th Grade Reading	Foundational and Accelerated Elementary Learning	Outcome	10%
Highly Capable Program Participation	Foundational and Accelerated Elementary Learning	Outcome	10%
8th Grade Reading	Preparation for High School Success	Outcome	10%
8th Grade Math	Preparation for High School Success	Outcome	10%
High School Level Math in 8th Grade	Preparation for High School Success	Opportunity	10%

Measure	Category	Category Type	Inclusion*
Dual Credit Participation (including CTE)	Options Aligned to Interests and Goals	Opportunity	5%
Dual Credit Participation (excluding CTE)	Options Aligned to Interests and Goals	Opportunity	5%
Ninth Grade on Track	Options Aligned to Interests and Goals	Outcome	10%
4-Year Graduation Rate	Preparation for Postsecondary Success	Outcome	10%

*Inclusion percentages apply to school districts with all measures. Districts with fewer measures will have different percentages. All measures are equally weighted (averaged) except Dual Credit, which is combined to create one measure.

Note: Categories are aligned with OSPI's Annual Snapshot on Student Opportunity and Outcomes – 2025.

Award Calculations

Achievement Award

The Achievement Award is calculated using data from the most recent complete school year. The calculation converts each measure rate to a measure Z-score for aggregation and school district selection.

Figure 2 shows the years used for both the Achievement Award and the Progress Award.

Figure 2: Measures and Years of Data

Measure	Achievement Award School Year	Progress Award School Years
Regular Attendance	2025	2023 and 2025
Kindergarten Readiness	2025	2023 and 2025
4th Grade Reading	2025	2023 and 2025
Highly Capable Program Participation	2025	2023 and 2025
8th Grade Reading	2025	2023 and 2025
8th Grade Math	2025	2023 and 2025
High School Level Math in 8th Grade	2025	2023 and 2025
Dual Credit Participation (including CTE)	2025	2023 and 2025
Dual Credit Participation (excluding CTE)	2025	2023 and 2025
Ninth Grade on Track	2025	2023 and 2025
4-Year Graduation	2025	2023 and 2025

Step 1. Convert Rates to Z-scores

The SSAEE equally weights opportunity measures with outcome measures. If the measures were left in their rate format, it would mean combining 4-year graduation rates with the rate of students participating in highly capable programs. This would be problematic because graduation rates are often above 80%, and highly capable program participation rates are often below 5%. While both measures are on the 0% to 100% scale, they generally exist on opposite ends. Converting the rates to Z-scores places school districts' scores relative to each measure's mean where the mean equals 0.

Figure 3, which displays the mean and standard deviation for each measure in the Achievement Award calculation, shows variation in measure mean and standard deviation. For example, the 4-Year Graduation Rate measure has a mean of 85.92% with a standard deviation of 13.87%, while

the Highly Capable Program Participation measure has a mean of 5.92% and a standard deviation of 4.42%.

Figure 3: Measure Mean and Standard Deviation for the Achievement Award

Measure	Mean	Standard Deviation
Regular Attendance	0.7179	0.1336
Kindergarten Readiness	0.5404	0.1881
4th Grade Reading	0.6586	0.1470
Highly Capable Program Participation	0.0592	0.0442
8th Grade Reading	0.6886	0.1409
8th Grade Math	0.5468	0.1619
High School Level Math in 8th Grade	0.2407	0.2179
Dual Credit Participation (including CTE)	0.5303	0.2594
Dual Credit Participation (excluding CTE)	0.3174	0.1888
Ninth Grade on Track	0.7169	0.1671
4-Year Graduation Rate	0.8592	0.1387

Note: No mean or standard deviation was calculated for the Dual Language Access measure because that measure is not factored into the award.

To mitigate the impact of extreme outliers, OSPI caps the Z-score for each measure at +/- 3. Figure 4 presents three fictitious school districts that will be used throughout this section to demonstrate how we capped the score.

Figure 4: Z-Score Calculation for the Achievement Award

School District	Measure	Rate	Z-Score	Capped Z-Score
School District A	4-Year Graduation Rate	87.7%	0.128	0.128
School District B	4-Year Graduation Rate	0.0%	-6.194	-3.000
School District C	4-Year Graduation Rate	85.7%	-0.016	-0.016

Step 2. Calculate an Average Z-Score

To identify school districts for the Achievement Award, a few more pieces of information must be calculated:

- A. The Dual Credit Participation (Combined) measure.
- B. The total number of measures with data available for each school district.
- C. The average Z-score for each school district.

Dual Credit Participation (Combined) Measure

To calculate the Dual Credit Participation (Combined) measure, OSPI took the capped average of the Z-scores for Dual Credit (excluding CTE) and Dual Credit (including CTE) for each school district. This allowed both the Dual Credit Participation (excluding CTE) and the Dual Credit Participation (including CTE) measures to have equal weight in the final calculation. Figure 5 shows the calculation for the three fictional school districts.

Figure 5: Calculating Dual Credit Participation (Combined) Measure for the Achievement Award

School District	Dual Credit (including CTE) Z-score	Dual Credit (excluding CTE) Z-score	Dual Credit (Combined) Z-score
School District A	1.460	2.693	2.076
School District B	-0.4290	0.4750	0.023
School District C	0.4575	0.7867	0.6221

Once a Dual Credit Participation (Combined) measure was calculated, the Dual Credit Participation (including CTE) and the Dual Credit Participation (excluding CTE) measures were removed from the process.

Total Number of Measures

A measure counted for a school district if a Z-score was generated. This removed a measure for any school district where a school district reported fewer than 10 students, including zero reported students.

Figure 6 shows the number and percentage of school districts by the number of measures they had for the final calculation. Most school districts (61.8%) had all 10 academic measures. Slightly over 25% of school districts had six or fewer academic measures.

Figure 6: Number and Percentage of School Districts, by Number of Achievement Measures

Number of Academic Measures	Count of School Districts	Percent of School Districts
1	13	3.94%
2	21	6.36%
3	20	6.06%
4	18	5.45%
5	5	1.52%
6	11	3.33%
7	12	3.64%
8	3	0.91%
9	23	6.97%
10	204	61.82%

Average Z-Score Calculation

For each school district, the final school district score was calculated by summing the capped Z-scores across individual measures and dividing by the number of measures present for a district. For example, School A (in figure 7) had a total capped Z-score of 14.52 and 10 academic measures; the school district had a final average Z-score of 1.452.

Figure 7: Average Z-Score Calculation for the Achievement Award

School District	Sum of Capped Z-Scores	Number of Academic Measures	Final Average Z-Score
School District A	14.50	10	1.45
School District B	-0.88	3	-0.29
School District C	-2.72	10	-0.27

Identifying Achievement Awardees

The final step in the process was identifying awardee school districts. To be considered for the Achievement Award, a school district must have had a minimum of seven measures (not including Dual Language Access). A school district serving grades K–8 would be included if it had all of the following measures:

- A. 4th Grade Reading.
- B. 8th Grade Math.

- C. 8th Grade Reading.
- D. High School Level Math in 8th Grade.
- E. Highly Capable Program Participation.
- F. Kindergarten Readiness.
- G. Regular Attendance.

Of those school districts with at least seven measures, OSPI identified the 25 school districts with the highest average Z-score. In case of a tie at the 25th position, all districts with that score would be presented with an Achievement Award.

Progress Award

The Progress Award is calculated using changes in rates from a base school year to the most recent complete school year. Similar to the Achievement Award calculation, this award calculation converts each measure rate to a measure Z-score for aggregation and school district selection.

Step 1: Calculating Progress

The Progress Award calculation uses two school years of data, a base school year and the most recent complete school year. For the 2026 SSAEE, the base school year was 2023 and the most recent complete school year was 2025 (figure 2 shows the years used for the Achievement Award and the Progress Award).

Each progress calculation is specific to the measure. For example, Figure 8 shows that School District A’s graduation rate was 97.0% in 2023 and 95.0% in 2025. This school district had a decrease of -2.0 percentage points. A school must have a rate in both the base school year and the most recent school year to have a percentage point difference calculated. School District B provides an example where the school district did not provide data in the base year or has not been opened for three years. If no percentage point change can be calculated, that measure is removed from the calculation in a later step.

Figure 8: Percentage Point Change Calculation for the Progress Award

School District	Measure	Base Year Rate	Most Recent Year Rate	Progress
School District A	Graduation	97.0%	95.0%	-2.0 Percentage Points
School District B	Graduation	N/A	58.0%	N/A
School District C	High School Level Math in 8th Grade	0.0%	52.0%	52.0 Percentage Points

Step 2: Convert Percentage Point Change to Z-scores

As demonstrated in Figure 8, school districts can experience positive or negative progress. To account for this variation in progress and the variation in measures, the percentage point changes

were converted into Z-scores. Figure 9 shows the mean percentage point change and standard deviation for each measure.

Figure 9: Percentage Point Change Mean, Standard Deviation for the Progress Award

Measure	Mean	Standard Deviation
4th Grade Reading	0.0211	0.0968
4-Year Graduation Rate	0.0136	0.1269
8th Grade Math	0.0184	0.1113
8th Grade Reading	-0.0134	0.1125
9th Grade on Track	0.0103	0.1119
High School Level Math in 8th Grade	0.0095	0.1406
Dual Credit Participation (excluding CTE)	0.0448	0.1056
Dual Credit Participation (including CTE)	0.0345	0.1557
Highly Capable Program Participation	0.0087	0.0219
Kindergarten Readiness	0.0445	0.1654
Regular Attendance	0.0431	0.0783

Note: No mean or standard deviation was calculated for the Dual Language Access measure because that measure is not factored into the award.

Given the small mean values and the relatively larger standard deviations, in some instances Z-scores were very far away from the mean. To mitigate the impact of extreme outliers, the Z-score was capped for each measure at +/- 3. Figure 10 shows how some measures for school districts were capped.

Figure 10: Z-Score Calculation for the Progress Award

School District	Measure	Base Year Rate	Most Recent Year Rate	Z-Score	Capped Z-Score
School District A	Highly Capable Program Participation	5.0%	7.0%	0.5	0.5
School District B	Regular Attendance	10.0%	2.0%	-1.5	-1.5
School District C	High School Level Math in 8th Grade	0.0%	52.0	3.6	3.0

Step 3. Calculate an Average Z-Score

To create an average Z-score, a few more pieces of information must be calculated:

- A. The Dual Credit Participation (Combined) measure.
- B. The total number of measures with data available for each school district.
- C. The average Z-score for each school district.

Dual Credit Participation (Combined) Measure

To calculate the Dual Credit Participation (Combined) measure, OSPI took the capped average of the Z-scores for Dual Credit (excluding CTE) and Dual Credit (including CTE) for each school district. This allowed both the Dual Credit Participation (excluding CTE) and the Dual Credit Participation (including CTE) measures to have equal weight in the final calculation. Figure 11 shows the calculation for the three fictional school districts.

Figure 11: Calculating Dual Credit Participation (Combined) Measure for the Progress Award

School District	Dual Credit Measure	Dual Credit Percent Point Change	Dual Credit Z-score	Dual Credit (Combined) Z-score
School District A	Excluding CTE	0.034	-0.064	-0.060
School District A	Including CTE	0.03	-0.055	-0.060
School District B	Excluding CTE	0.00	-0.424	-0.323
School District B	Including CTE	0.00	-0.222	-0.323
School District C	Excluding CTE	N/A	N/A	N/A
School District C	Including CTE	N/A	N/A	N/A

Once a Dual Credit Participation (Combined) Measure was calculated, the Dual Credit Participation (including CTE) and the Dual Credit Participation (excluding CTE) measures were removed from the process.

Total Number of Measures

A measure counted for a school district if a Z-score was generated. This removed a measure for any school district where a school district reported fewer than 10 students, including zero reported students. The school district must have had 10 or more students in both the base year and the most recent complete school year.

Figure 12 shows the number and percentage of school districts by the number of progress measures they had for the final calculation. Most school districts (58.9%) had all 10 progress measures. Slightly over 25% of school districts had six or fewer progress measures.

Figure 12: Number and Percentage of School Districts, by Number of Progress Measures

Number of Academic Measures	Count of School Districts	Percent of School Districts
1	18	5.52%
2	27	8.28%
3	18	5.52%
4	12	3.68%
5	6	1.84%
6	7	2.15%
7	11	3.37%
8	8	2.45%
9	27	8.28%
10	192	58.90%

Average Z-Score Calculation

For each school district, the final school district score was calculated by summing the capped Z-scores across individual measures and dividing by the number of measures present for a district. For example, School A (in figure 13) had a total capped Z-score of 4.32 and 10 academic measures; the school district had a final average Z-score of 0.432.

Figure 13: Average Z-Score Calculation for the Progress Award

School District	Sum of Capped Z-Scores	Number of Progress Measures	Final Average Z-Score
School District A	4.324	10	0.4324
School District B	-1.793	2	-0.8964
School District C	10.02	7	1.432

Identifying Progress Awardees

The final step in the process was identifying awardee school districts. To be considered for the Progress Award, a school district must have had a minimum of seven measures (not including Dual Language Access). A school district serving grades K–8 would be included if it had all of the following measures:

- A. 4th Grade Reading.
- B. 8th Grade Math.
- C. 8th Grade Reading.
- D. High School Level Math in 8th Grade.
- E. Highly Capable Program Participation.
- F. Kindergarten Readiness.
- G. Regular Attendance.

Of those school districts with at least seven measures, OSPI identified the 25 school districts with the highest average Z-score. In case of a tie at the 25th position, all districts with that score would be presented with a Progress Award.

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