

# State Superintendent's Award for Educational Excellence FAQ

## Question (Q) 1: What is the State Superintendent's Award for Educational Excellence?

Answer (A) 1: The State Superintendent's Award for Educational Excellence (SSAEE) is presented to school districts throughout the state for exhibiting educational excellence and opportunity. The award was introduced in 2026 following the U.S. Department of Education's discontinuation of the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program. The SSAEE has two award categories: Achievement and Progress.

## Q 2: Which measures are included in the award?

A 2: The award includes 11 measures that span from pre-kindergarten education to high school graduation. All 11 are included in the [Annual Snapshots on Student Opportunity and Outcomes](#). Figure 1 shows the list of measures used for the SSAEE.

**Figure 1. SSAEE Measures, by Grade Span**

Grade Span	Category	Measure
Elementary	Pre-Kindergarten Learning	Kindergarten Readiness
Elementary	Foundational and Accelerated Elementary Learning	4th Grade Reading
Elementary	Foundational and Accelerated Elementary Learning	Highly Capable Program Participation
Middle	Preparation for High School Success	8th Grade Reading
Middle	Preparation for High School Success	8th Grade Math
Middle	Preparation for High School Success	High School Level Math in 8th Grade
High	Options Aligned to Interests and Goals	Dual Credit Participation (Including CTE)
High	Options Aligned to Interests and Goals	Dual Credit Participation (Excluding CTE)
High	Options Aligned to Interests and Goals	9th Grade on Track
High	Preparation for Postsecondary Success	4-Year Graduation Rate
All	All	Regular Attendance

### Q 3: What is the SSAEE for Achievement?

A 3: The SSAEE for Achievement is presented to the 25 top-performing school districts in educational achievement in the previous school year. The award combines 11 measures to determine highest achievement (see figure 1).

### Q 4: What is the SSAEE for Progress?

A 4: The SSAEE for Progress is presented to the 25 top-performing school districts in progress and improvement of educational achievement over the last three school years. The award combines 11 measures to determine the greatest amount of growth (see figure 1).

### Q 5: How are the awards calculated?

A 5: OSPI uses a statistical method called a **z-score** to put measures on a common scale. That scale shows how far each school district's score is from the state average. The converted measures for each district are totaled and then divided by the number of measures—this creates a district-specific average that is used to determine the top performing districts. For more information on the calculation of awards, see the [SSAEE Business Rules](#).

### Q 6: Will this be an annual award?

A 6: Yes.

### Q 7: How do these awards differ from the School Recognition Program?

A 7: The SSAEE is a district-based award that uses data included in the Annual Snapshot of Student Opportunity and Outcomes, which details OSPI's key focus areas spanning from early learning to graduation.

The [Washington School Recognition Program](#), a school-based award, uses data from the Washington School Improvement Framework (WSIF) to determine awardees. The School Recognition Program required by [RCW 28A.657.110\(3\)](#), is led by the Washington State Board of Education in cooperation with OSPI and in collaboration with the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee.

### Q 8: Are Dual Language Access programs included in the recognition?

A 8: Yes. Districts that receive an award that have one or more dual language programs will have their program(s) acknowledged in their award letter sent from the State Superintendent.

## Q 9: Which school districts are eligible for the awards?

A 9: All of Washington's traditional school districts, State-Tribal Education Compact Schools, and charter schools are potentially eligible for the award. A district must have at least 7 measures with data available out of the 11 measures used in the analysis to be eligible for the award.

Since not all districts have enough programs or students to have data for all measures, the average allows for school districts with different measure data available to be compared. Additionally, in order to protect student data privacy, a measure is only counted in the calculation when the data collected for that measure represents 10 or more students. For more information on the calculation of awards, see the [SSAEE Business Rules](#).

## Q 10: Why are districts required to have at least seven measures with data available to be eligible for the awards?

A 10: A minimum of seven measures is used to ensure that school districts have sufficient data that represents a range of grade levels. This amount also allows for a wider variety of school districts to be eligible for the award. For example, a district that serves students in grades K–8 typically has seven measures with data available: Regular Attendance, Kindergarten Readiness, 4th Grade Reading, Highly Capable Program Participation, 8th Grade Reading, 8th Grade Math, and High School Level Math in the 8th Grade.

## Q 11: What are the Annual Snapshots of Student Opportunities and Outcomes?

A 11: The [Annual Snapshots](#) are a high-level, one-page look at data that summarizes student opportunity and outcomes. They were created to help students, families, educators, and the public understand how individual school districts and the state as a whole are progressing on OSPI's key focus areas spanning from early learning to graduation.

## Q 12: Where does the data for the SSAEE come from?

A 12. Most of the data for the SSAEE comes from the [OSPI Report Card](#). There are two measures that are not presented on the Report Card. Those two measures are High School Level Math in 8th Grade and Dual Credit without CTE. Additional information on those measures can be found on [OSPI's SSAEE webpage](#).

Report Card is updated periodically and thus the data may not be identical in all instances.

## Q: Is this different than some of the other data frameworks or compilations?

A: Yes, the SSAEE is a new school district recognition, using the measures in the Annual Snapshot on Student Opportunity and Outcomes. The Washington School Improvement Framework (WSIF), the Washington School Recognition Program, and the State Board of Education (SBE) Educational System Health Indicators all serve different purposes.

Recognition or Data Framework	Agency	Purpose or Origin
State Superintendent's Award for Educational Excellence	OSPI	District-level recognition of OSPI's key focus areas
Annual Snapshot on Student Opportunity and Outcomes	OSPI	One-page look with OSPI's key focus areas
<a href="#">Washington School Improvement Framework</a> (WSIF)	OSPI	Federal accountability – Requirement under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
<a href="#">Washington School Recognition Program</a> (SBE)	SBE (lead) OSPI (in coordination) EOGOAC (in collaboration)	Required by <a href="#">RCW 28A.657.110(3)</a> – School-level recognition for performance as measured by the Washington School Improvement Framework (WSIF)
<a href="#">Educational System Health Indicators</a>	SBE	Required by <a href="#">RCW 28A.150.550</a> – Provides state education leaders with a comprehensive view of how the state's K–12 system is performing

**Q: Does SSAEE include the same measures as those in existing data frameworks, such as Washington School Improvement Framework (WSIF), SBE Recognition, Educational System Health Indicators?**

A. There is some overlap, but the SSAEE specifically includes OSPI’s key focus areas for district-level recognition. The table below outlines the measures that are included in the SSAEE and other data frameworks or reporting areas:

	SSAEE	Annual Snapshot	WSIF	SBE Recognition	Educational System Health
Kindergarten Readiness	x	x			x
Dual Language Access		x			
4th Grade Reading	x	x	x	x	x
Highly Capable Participation	x	x			
8th Grade Reading	x	x	x	x	
8th Grade Math	x	x	x	x	x
HS Math in 8th Grade	x	x			
Dual Credit, Including CTE	x	x	x	x	
Dual Credit, Excluding CTE	x	x			
Ninth Grade on Track	x	x	x	x	
4-Year Graduation	x	x	x	x	x
Regular Attendance	x	x	x	x	
ELA and Math (grades 3–8,10)			x	x	
English Learner Progress			x	x	
Readiness for College Coursework					x
Postsecondary Engagement					x