

WA Assessment System

Budget Language

\$26,975,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024, \$26,975,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025, \$1,350,000 of the education legacy trust account—state appropriation, and \$15,868,000 of the general fund—federal appropriation are provided solely for development and implementation of the Washington state assessment system.

Proviso Purpose

The program is to develop and administer a statewide assessment system to the requisite student population in the state of Washington. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), requires 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 accountability purposes include:

- English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics in grades 3–8 and one grade in high school
- Science in grades 5, 8, and one grade of high school

Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are also assessed each year in the same grades and content areas.

Services Provided

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in conjunction with contractors provide the following services:

- Implements activities to develop items/tasks and assessments aligned to the existing learning standards/English language development (ELD) standards.
- Designs and delivers online assessments and other accommodated formats.
- Outlines procedures for security and administration of the tests, including delivery and return of all test materials.
- Facilitates scoring and reporting of all student work.
- Manages the processing of data for the purposes of performance reporting.

Alternate assessments are provided for students having the most significant cognitive disabilities identified in their Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Criteria for Receiving Services/Grants

Being one of the state's 295 public school districts or seven state-tribal education compact schools.



Beneficiaries in the 2024-25 School Year – 032

Number of School Districts:	All
Number of Schools:	All
Number of Students:	All
Number of Educators:	All

Beneficiaries in the 2024-25 School Year – 400

Number of School Districts:	All
Number of Schools:	All
Number of Students:	All
Number of Educators:	All

Beneficiaries in the 2024-25 School Year – JK0

Number of School Districts:	All
Number of Schools:	All
Number of Students:	All
Number of Educators:	All

Are Federal or Other Funds Contingent on State Funding?

Yes. ESEA Title 1 funds from the federal government are linked to the state implementation of an assessment program; the financial responsibility for the program is a shared expense with the state.

State Funding History

032 – WA State Assessment System

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2025	\$26,765,000	\$24,965,757
2024	\$26,975,000	\$20,905,524
2023	\$26,975,000	\$19,882,354
2022	\$26,975,000	\$26,965,682
2021	\$26,975,000	\$23,594,652

JK0 – Ed Legacy Trust Account – WA Assessment System

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2025	\$675,000	\$530,120
2024	\$675,000	\$819,747
2023	\$675,000	\$675,000
2022	\$675,000	\$0
2021	\$675,000	\$675,000

400 – Federal – WA Assessment System

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2025	\$7,934,000	\$7,247,541
2024	\$7,934,000	\$7,600,087
2023	\$7,934,000	\$6,828,333
2022	\$7,934,000	\$7,584,160
2021	\$7,934,000	\$4,980,415

Number of Beneficiaries Per Fiscal Year (e.g. School Districts, Schools, Students, Educators, Other)

032 – WA State Assessment System

Fiscal Year	Number of Beneficiaries
2025	All
2024	All
2023	All
2022	All
2021	All

400 – Federal – WA Assessment System

Fiscal Year	Number of Beneficiaries
2025	All
2024	All
2023	All
2022	All
2021	All

JK0 – Ed Legacy Trust Account – WA Assessment System

Fiscal Year	Number of Beneficiaries
2025	All
2024	All
2023	All
2022	All
2021	All

Programmatic Changes Since Inception (If Any)

- **English language arts and mathematics.** Annual statewide testing began in reading, writing, and math in grades 4, 7, and 10 between 1997–99. In 2006, to meet *No Child Left Behind* requirements, testing expanded to grades 3, 5, 6, and 8 for reading and math. Over the years, assessments have transitioned from paper and pencil to online, adopted college- and career-readiness standards, and incorporated Smarter Balanced computer-adaptive tests. Interim tools such as the Digital Library and *Tools for Teachers* were added, and score results are now returned within three weeks instead of the next school year. High school testing moved to grade 11 in 2015, returning to grade 10 in 2018. End-of-course math assessments (2011–14) were replaced by comprehensive assessments in 2015. Adjusted Smarter Balanced blueprints introduced in spring 2022 reduced testing time by about one-third while maintaining reliability. In spring 2024, the test window was extended statewide for added flexibility.
- **Science.** Annual science testing began in grade 8 and 10 in 2004 and added grade 5 in 2005. Science standards were revised in 2009 and 2013 (aligned to NGSS). Science assessments moved from paper to online in 2018. Between 2012–17, high school testing focused on end-of-course Biology but returned to a comprehensive NGSS-based assessment in 2018.
- **Alternate assessment.** From 2001–14, Washington used an annual portfolio-based alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities, improving accessibility, alignment to grade-level standards, and performance scoring. In 2015, the Washington Access to Instruction & Measurement (WA-AIM) replaced it for ELA and math in grades 3–8 and 10, and added NGSS-aligned science in 2017–18. WA-AIM uses performance-based tasks tailored to each student’s demonstrated level of complexity and measures growth annually.

Program(s) Evaluation or Major Findings

Washington administered a set of high-quality student academic assessments to measure the progress, learning acceleration, and opportunity gaps of all students in the state. Washington continued to use the Smarter Balanced adjusted blueprint to reduce testing time.

The data from the spring 2025 test administration indicates 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. Identifying overall trends helps influence policy priorities and investments in targeted resources to support student learning.

In collaboration with the U.S Department of Education and Peer Review, assessment consortia, contracted service providers, and national and state technical advisory committees, OSPI continues evaluating and improving the assessment program for quality and efficiency.

Student performance at the statewide, district, and school levels has been posted to the [Washington State Report Card](#) website.

Major Challenges Faced by Program(s)

OSPI, in collaboration with the Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC), will continue to provide guidance to avoid the misinterpretation of what the results of these tests mean. The test results for students who do not meet the college readiness proficiency standard are not necessarily below grade level in their knowledge. OSPI's [September 2025 press release](#) reminds families, policymakers, and community members that the tests are not pass/fail and they do not provide a complete picture of a student's knowledge and skills. That's why evidence-based measures like student attendance, course-taking, and GPA should also be taken into consideration.

Maintaining a high-quality and cost-effective assessment system continues to be the focus. It is challenging for a summative assessment to meet the multiple purposes that are demanded of it (system accountability, individual student achievement and growth, informing instruction, and others).

OSPI is seeking additional ways to provide more information about student learning.

Future Opportunities

- As state law requires ([RCW 28A.655.070](#)), OSPI develops the state's learning standards and periodically revises them based on the student learning goals in [RCW 28A.150.210](#). OSPI launched the [Washington State Learning Standards Review project](#) in 2023. After adopting new or revised state learning standards, an evaluation of alignment to the state assessment will be conducted.
- As part of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), OSPI is required to develop and implement a formal monitoring plan that provides the agency feedback on district and school assessment administration procedures. OSPI plans to continue monitoring during the 2025–26 school year. Specific dates will be determined in winter 2026. 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.
- Beginning spring 2025, ELA, math, and science tests used a hybrid automated scoring model, combining advanced technology with expert human review. Expanding this approach will

reduce state costs, expedite score reporting and feedback, ensure consistent scoring, and allow flexibility to adjust or hand-score responses when needed. The alternate assessment will remain fully hand scored.

Other Relevant Information

See [Washington State Report Card](#)

Schools/Districts Receiving Assistance

[Click here to see a list of all OSPI grant recipients in the 2025 Fiscal Year.](#)

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