Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Washington Comprehensive Assessment Program (WCAP)
2026

Authorizing Legislation: RCW 28A.300.041

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Report Scope

This joint report from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the State Board of Education (SBE) provides the annual update on Washington's Comprehensive Assessment Program (WCAP) for the 2025–26 school year. It covers statewide assessment changes, the availability and use of instructionally informative and interim assessments, assessment costs, and State Board of Education activities related to the program as required by Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 28A.300.041.

Assessment System

Recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as meeting all federal requirements, Washington's assessment system informs instruction, accountability, program improvement, and policy decisions. State assessments are one of many indicators of student learning and include a kindergarten inventory of skills, instructionally supportive interim assessment resources, summative assessments in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science, an alternate assessment for eligible students, and an English language proficiency assessment.

2026 Highlights

Compared to the previous year, 1.7% more students entered kindergarten demonstrating readiness across all areas of development and learning. Statewide use of instructional resources increased by 6.6% and interim assessment use increased by 15.8%. Summative assessment results remained generally consistent with prior years across all grade levels. The spring 2026 summative data show that 73.7% of students demonstrated at least foundational grade-level knowledge in English language arts and 66.5% did so in mathematics. These results were reported in the September 10, 2026, news release, *State Superintendent Chris Reykdal Unveils New Student Achievement Data and Budget Priorities*.

Assessment Costs

Analysis of 2026 assessment costs show that current biennial state and federal funding was sufficient. Actual statewide contracted assessment costs increased 0.3% from 2025 but were 4% below the year's anticipated contracted obligation.

INTRODUCTION

Washington's Comprehensive Assessment Program (WCAP) reflects more than three decades of state and federal efforts to align assessments with academic standards, measure student achievement, and support instruction. The system includes a kindergarten program to support a smooth transition into public schools; interim tools that help educators monitor learning throughout the year; annual assessments in English language arts, mathematics, and science; alternate assessments for eligible students; and English language proficiency testing.

Statewide student results are posted on the Washington State Report Card each year by September 10th as required by RCW 28A.655.090. Table 1 summarizes statewide engagement with the assessment system during 2025–26. Together, these measures show how WCAP supports statewide accountability while providing information to guide instruction and program improvement.

Table 1: 2025–26 Statewide Assessment At-A-Glance

Measure	2025–26	Change from 2024–25
Kindergarten Observations of Developing Skills	68,001	(-) 3.3.%
Tools for Teachers Resources with Embedded Formative Assessments used by New Users	2979	(+) 6.6%
Interim Assessments Completed	1,037,125	(+) 15.8%
English Language Arts and Math Tests Taken	1,077,694	(-) .3%
Science Tests Taken	213,563	(-) 1.7%
Alternate English Language Arts, Math, and Science Tests Taken	14,824	(+) 7.4%
English Language Proficiency Tests Taken	158,560	(-) 2.3%

Source: Report Card Assessment Data, September 9, 2026, Smarter Balanced Tools for Teachers Monthly Data Report, October 5, 2026, and SY25–26 Interim Test Completion Dashboard, September 21, 2026.

BACKGROUND

Washington students take annual state and federal tests to assess their learning growth as well as the progress of the educational system as a whole. A timeline of historical changes to Washington's assessment program is available in Appendix A—State Testing Timeline. State tests include the following:

Washington Kindergarten Inventory of 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.

Smarter Balanced Assessment 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 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 are available to educators during the entire 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 assessments containing two online parts: a computer adaptive test (CAT) and a performance task (PT), but contain more questions. "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, 2026, p 2; 2026–27 Interim Assessments Overview).

Interim assessments are available September through June each year. Interim assessments are available to administer to students both in person and remotely. For students who complete interim assessments, schools have 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 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). The SBA is an untimed test; students are allowed as much time as needed.

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.

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 ELA 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.

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 registration 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.

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.

Additional state testing information can be found on the OSPI State Testing website.

UPDATE STATUS

Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS)

During the summer 2025 WaKIDS 101 training season, the Early Learning team introduced Interrater Reliability certification as a new requirement for all teachers new to WaKIDS before they begin assessing Transition to Kindergarten (TK) and kindergarten children. The purpose of this change was to increase reliability and validity of the WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment data the teachers collect on their students.

TK students are assessed twice during the school year, allowing WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment data to be used to track growth over time. These data provide educators and families with insights into students' development throughout their TK and kindergarten years, resulting in two years of developmental information.

In fall 2025, 55.3% of incoming kindergarten students demonstrated readiness in all six domains, a 1.7% increase from the previous year, despite a 3.3% decline in the number of students entering kindergarten.

Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) System

Tools for Teachers

There were no major structural or policy changes to the Smarter Balanced Tools for Teachers platform during 2025–26. The platform continued to provide classroom activities, lessons, and professional learning resources that support educators in implementing the formative assessment process and using assessment information to inform instruction.

Educator use of Tools for Teachers continued to grow during 2025–26. Compared with the previous year, average monthly unique users increased by 10.7%, while total logins increased by 11.2%. Use peaked in April 2026, with more than 2,500 unique users and nearly 14,800 logins. The continued growth in usage demonstrates sustained and increasing educator engagement with the assessment resources available through the platform.

Interim Assessments

Smarter Balanced (SB) released four new Focused Interim Assessment Blocks (FIAB) per grade level for English Language Arts (ELA) focused on testing targets related to language use and word meanings. Release of these FIABs ensures that all testing targets are covered by FIABs. Educators can administer these FIABs flexibly throughout the year.

SB released four new FIABs for mathematics in grades 3–5. These assessments all align with grade-level Measurement and Data targets. They may also serve as a starting point for educators as they work to incorporate the addition of Data Science standards into their instruction as a result of the newly adopted 2026 Washington State K–12 Learning Standards for Mathematics. With these additional FIABs, all standards in the grade 3–5 band now have aligned interim assessments that educators can implement over the course of the school year to measure student performance in a setting similar to the annual summative assessments.

OSPI also expanded the autoscoring 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 retained the option to hand score student responses.

The total use of interim assessments increased in 2025–26 by 15.8%. Table 2 provides completed interim assessment data by subject area for the 2025–26 school year and changes from the previous year.

Table 2: Interim Assessments Completed by Subject Area

Measure	Subject Area	2025–26	Change form 2024–25
Interim Comprehensive Assessments (ICAs)	English Language Arts	29,613	(+) 28.2%
Interim Comprehensive Assessments (ICAs)	Mathematics	35,837	(+) 13.6%
Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs) & Focused Interim Assessment Blocks (FIABs)	English Language Arts	435,429	(+) 23.0%
Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs) & Focused Interim Assessment Blocks (FIABs)	Mathematics	536,246	(+) 10.2%

Source: SY25–26 Interim Test Completion Dashboard, September 21, 2026.

Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA)

No changes were made to the summative SBA from the previous year.

The Smarter Balanced ELA and mathematics assessments in grade 3–8 and high school have now met the requirements of the US Department of Education for a valid and reliable assessment as noted in Appendix B—Washington Peer Review Status Letter, dated September 2, 2026.

The spring 2026 Smarter Balanced ELA and mathematics online test window was from March 2 to June 26, 2026. This assessment was also offered in an accommodated paper-pencil format from April 6 to May 15, 2026. Across all grade levels, 73.7% of students demonstrated foundational grade-level knowledge and above in English language arts, and 66.5% of students demonstrated the same in math.

Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science (WCAS)

No changes were made to WCAS from the previous year. The WCAS spring 2026 online and paper-pencil windows opened on April 6, 2026. The online window closed on June 5, 2026; whereas, the accommodated paper-pencil window closed earlier on May 15, 2026, to allow time for scoring. There were 74.4% of students across all grade levels that demonstrated foundational grade-level knowledge and above in science.

Washington Access to Instruction and Measurement (WA-AIM)

No changes were made to WA-AIM from the previous year.

The WA-AIM ELA and mathematics assessments in grade 3–8 and high school have now met the requirements of the US Department of Education for a valid and reliable assessment as noted in Appendix B.

The 2025–26 WA-AIM administration window opened on January 26, 2026, and closed May 1, 2026. While the administration window is a set timeframe, the items and form content used in the assessment are available throughout the school for instructional purposes. Across all grade levels, 67.2% of students demonstrated foundational grade-level knowledge and above in English language arts, 79.6% of students demonstrated the same in math, and 57.1% of students demonstrated the same in science.

Federal law caps participation in the alternate assessment at no more than 1% of all testers in the state. Washington exceeded this cap in ELA (1.14%), Math (1.14%), and Science (1.1%). OSPI began offering virtual information sessions to support districts in reviewing data and decisions to ensure accurate identification of WA-AIM testers in 2026.

WIDA ACCESS

This year, WIDA ACCESS was revised to align with the 2020 WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards Framework, replacing the 2012 standards. In July 2026, WIDA conducted the ACCESS Standard Setting to establish new proficiency-level cut scores for the revised assessment. The WIDA ACCESS test administration window opened on January 26, 2026, and closed on March 20, 2026. In the 2025–26 school year, 155,562 students were expected to test; 9.25% of students exiting ELD services.

WIDA Alternate ACCESS

The WIDA Alternate ACCESS administration window was the same as the WIDA ACCESS assessment. In the 2025–26 school year, 2,998 students participated in the WIDA Alternate ACCESS administration; 10.24% of students exiting ELD services.

Other 2025–26 Assessment Related Activities

- As part of implementation planning of House Bill 1079, which allows students enrolled in online school programs to take state assessments remotely, OSPI conducted a feasibility study during the 2026 test administration with 1010 students participating.
- Mathematics practice and training tests featured new embedded accommodations.
- Supplemental Individual Student Report (ISR) files for ELA, mathematics, and science were optimized to reduce file sizes, making them easier for districts to download and distribute to families.
- In 2026, OSPI updated how student achievement percentages are calculated on the state report card for ELA, mathematics, and science. Report Card will display assessment achievement percentages using the number of students who took the assessment as the denominator instead of students expected to test. This update was done in response to federal reporting guidance and was applied retroactively to all years reported. See OSPI's Change to Assessment Results on the Washington State Report Card Q&A for additional information.
- The formal adoption of the revised mathematics learning standards was completed June 18, 2026 with Bulletin 023-26.
- The formal adoption of the revised learning standards for English Language Arts was completed on August 6, 2026 with Bulletin 026-26.
- The initial adoption of the Washington State K–12 Learning Standards for Science was released on October 15, 2026 in Bulletin 035-26.

Cost Summary

There was an overall increase of 0.3% from 2025 but is well below the 12-month inflation rate of 3.4% as of August 2026, according to the Bureau of Labor of Statistics. Approximately 26% of the 2026 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.

The actual per-student cost to administer the Smarter Balanced and WCAS assessments in the 2025–26 school year was approximately $18 and $10, an increase from the prior year of 3% and 8% respectively.

Despite the increases from the prior year, the statewide contracted assessment expenses for the 2025–26 school year were approximately 4% below the anticipated contracted obligation. These savings were realized due to:

- Eliminating in-person advisory and development meetings

- Reducing science development activities
- Fewer paper tests administered

Table 3 below provides the total contract obligation and actual contractor payments to administer, score, and report the 2025–26 tests.

Table 3: School Year 2025–26 Contracted Cost Summary

Assessment	Contract Obligation	Contract Payments
WaKIDS	$1,337,826	$1,337,826
SBA	$14,777,072	$14,687,900
WCAS	$2,570,495	$2,234,131
WA-AIM	$1,992,685	$1,892,594
WIDA ACCESS & WIDA Alt ACCESS	$5,300,652	$4,837,413
TOTAL	**$25,978,731**	**$24,989,864**

Sources: Enterprise Contracts Management System & Agency Financial Reporting System Expenditure Reports, 2026.

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 2026. 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, revision, 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 under Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 180-51-230, mastery-based credit policy under WAC 180-51-051, and the system of accountability, and school recognition.

Activities of the Board in 2026

- 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 2025 and has developed a legislative proposal based off extensive stakeholder feedback to modernize graduation requirements.
- Ongoing support for expanding Washington's capacity to offer competency-based crediting opportunities and competency-based education, including the Mastery-based Learning Collaborative grant program.
- Appendix B, Figure 5 of the 2022 WCAP legislative report lists tests used for graduation and summarizes changes to the tests over time. There were no changes to scores in 2025–26. Current proficiency scores may be found on the SBE Graduation Pathway Options website.

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

The 2025–26 school year reflects a continued commitment to maintaining a high-quality statewide assessment system that provides meaningful information about student learning while supporting educators, families, and policymakers. Washington's assessment system remained stable while also advancing targeted improvements, including increased use of interim assessments and instructional resources, the transition of WIDA ACCESS to the 2020 WIDA ELD Standards Framework, expanded assessment accessibility, and continued efforts to improve assessment administration and reporting. At the same time, assessment costs remained within available funding, with actual contracted expenses below anticipated obligations.

Washington continues to collaborate with other states and national technical advisors to improve assessment systems through initiatives such as shorter tests, expanded online administration, automated scoring, interim assessments, and enhanced educator resources.

Looking ahead, OSPI and the State Board of Education will continue to collaborate on the state assessment system through specific statutory duties defined under Washington law. OSPI will continue to support the assessment system in response to evolving learning standards, student and educator needs, federal requirements, and policy priorities, while exploring opportunities to make assessments more accessible, instructionally useful, and effective in supporting student learning and system improvement.

Anticipated OSPI Activities in 2027 and beyond

- Building on the 2026 remote testing feasibility findings, OSPI will launch a remote testing pilot during the 2027 administration with approximately 40 participating districts.
- OSPI plans to continue monitoring school districts during the 2026–27 test windows, as required by ESSA. A list of the 2027 districts subject to random selection is available on the Monitoring of State Assessments website.
- OSPI is exploring enhancements to the Limited English Proficient (LEP) application within the Education Data System (EDS) to improve how Washington educators and district administrators manage, monitor, and report information related to multilingual and English learner students. EDS serves as OSPI's secure, centralized suite of web-based applications for educational data collection and management.
- OSPI is advancing the Washington State Learning Standards project to review, refine, and prioritize learning standards as well as create guidance and a two-to-five-year implementation plan for educators. Following adoption of the revised standards, OSPI will review state assessments to implement any necessary updates. Next steps include:
    - The formal adoption of the Washington State K–12 Learning Standards for Science is planned for 2027.
    - Statewide student assessments aligned to the revised mathematics standards are scheduled for Spring 2029.

    - Statewide student assessments aligned to the revised ELA standards are scheduled for Spring 2030. A full timeline for adoption and implementation is available on OSPI's public website.
- OSPI will review the WIDA ACCESS exit criteria following the revision of the WIDA ACCESS assessment to ensure appropriate identification for English language development services for multilingual students.

Anticipated SBE Activities in 2027 and beyond

- The Board has adopted a resolution describing the recommended updates to the graduation requirements, in collaboration with the FutureReady Task Force. The framework includes removing the graduation pathway requirement from the state graduation requirements. The Board recognizes that state assessments provide valuable information about student learning and system performance, including information that can help identify areas where students may need additional support or acceleration. Under the proposed framework, assessments would continue to serve these purposes but would no longer be used as a graduation requirement for students to earn a high school diploma.
    - Some of the changes would require legislative approval during the 2027 session (including removal of the graduation pathway requirement) while other changes can be implemented by the Board using its rulemaking authority and will proceed through a public rulemaking process. Additionally, the Board expects to share a report in December 2026 to provide a report on the FutureReady process before the 2027 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 graduation pathways, in particular 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)).

APPENDIX A

State Testing Timeline

Statewide testing in Washington began in spring 1997 following the passage of the Education Reform Law, which laid the groundwork for a standards-based assessment system. Since then, the state's assessment system has evolved to measure student achievement and meet state and federal accountability requirements.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, requires states to administer high-quality assessments that measure the achievement of all students. Washington's current state and federal accountability assessment systems include:

- Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBA) and Washington Access to Instruction and Measurement (WA-AIM) in English language arts and mathematics for students in grades 3–8 and 10
- Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science (WCAS) and Washington Access to Instruction and Measurement (WA-AIM) in science for students in grades 5, 8, and 11

Washington joined the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) in 2010 as a founding member state and fully implemented the SBA in spring 2015. The state transitioned to the WCAS in spring 2018 following a limited pilot in 2016 and statewide field testing in 2017.

WA-AIM, Washington's state alternate assessment, was developed for students with significant cognitive development and was implemented in spring 2015.

Statewide English language proficiency testing began in 2002 for reading and writing. Listening and speaking were added in 2006 into a single comprehensive annual and placement testing suite. Over time, changes to exit criteria were made and the eventual adoption of WIDA ACCESS, which is now used to identify multilingual learners' English language proficiency and determine continued eligibility for English Language Development (ELD) services.

Washington also expanded its focus on early learning. Funding for voluntary all-day kindergarten was phased in beginning in the 2007–08 school year. By 2011–12, the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) became a requirement for state-funded all-day kindergarten programs under RCW 28A.150.315 and RCW 28A.655.080.

Effective July 29, 2024, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) adopted permanent rules implementing House Bill 1550, which established the Transition to Kindergarten (TK) program for eligible children who may benefit from additional preparation before entering kindergarten. Under WAC 392-425-055, districts operating TK programs must administer the WaKIDS Whole-Child Assessment at program entry and at least one additional time during the school year.

ESSA also requires OSPI to monitor district and school assessment practices. Through its monitoring process, OSPI identifies opportunities to improve resources, guidance, and support for districts. After statewide implementation of monitoring in spring 2023, findings highlighted both successful practices

and areas for improvement, leading to enhancements in district assessment administration resources and supports.

The U.S. Department of Education evaluates statewide assessment systems through an evidence-based peer review process. Following multiple rounds of evidence submission, Washington's assessment program was recognized in 2026 as meeting ESSA requirements.

The state testing timeline outlines Washington's assessment system and its alignment to state academic standards.

APPENDIX B

Washington Peer Review Status Letter

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

September 2, 2026

The Honorable Chris Reykdal
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
47200 Old Capitol Building
PO Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Superintendent Reykdal:

Thank you for your participation in the U.S. Department of Education's (Department's) assessment peer review process under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). I appreciate the efforts of the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to prepare for the peer reviews which occurred in March 2026.

State assessment systems provide essential information that States, districts, schools, educators, and parents can use to identify the academic needs of students; strategically target resources and supports to meet students' unique needs; evaluate school and program effectiveness; and bolster academic achievement. A high-quality assessment system also provides critical information to parents about their children's advancement against and achievement of grade-level standards. The Department's peer review of State assessment systems is designed to provide feedback to States to support the development and administration of high-quality assessments.

External peer reviewers and Department staff carefully evaluated OSPI's submission, and the Department found, based on evidence received, that the following components of Washington's assessment system have met all statutory and regulatory requirements of the ESEA:

- General assessments in reading/language arts (R/LA) and mathematics in grades 3-8 and high school (Smarter Balanced).
- Alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards in R/LA and mathematics in grades 3-8 and high school (WA-AIM).

Congratulations on this significant accomplishment. Assessments that produce valid and reliable results are fundamental to a State's accountability system. Please be aware that approval of OSPI's assessments is not a determination that the system complies with Federal civil rights requirements, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, Title IX of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

The full peer review notes from the review are enclosed. These recommendations to the Department formed the basis of our determination. Please note that the peers' recommendations may differ from the Department's feedback; we encourage you

to read the full peer notes for additional suggestions and recommendations for improving your assessment system beyond what is noted in the Department's feedback.

I also want to take this opportunity to review the peer review status of the other ESEA-required assessments administered by the State, based upon our current records:[1]

- General assessments in science for grades 5, 8, and 10 (Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science (WCAS)): Substantially meets requirements of the ESEA.
- AA-AAAS in science for grades 5, 8, and 10 in science (WA-AIM): Substantially meets requirements of the ESEA.
- General English language proficiency (ELP) assessment (ACCESS): Substantially meets requirements of the ESEA.
- Alternate ELP assessment (Alternate ACCESS): Substantially meets requirements of the ESEA.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to improving educational outcomes for all students. I appreciate the work you are doing to improve your schools and provide a high-quality education for your students. If you have any questions, please contact my staff at: ESEA.Assessment@ed.gov.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Baesler
Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

Enclosure

cc: Susan Lathrop, Chief Education Officer
Deb Came, Assistant Superintendent for Data Analysis and Support

[1] https://www.ed.gov/media/document/washington-12-general-and-alternate-assessments-rla-math-science-and-englishhttps://www.ed.gov/media/document/washington-12-general-and-alternate-assessments-rla-math-science-and-english-language-proficiency-june-25-2025-110381.pdflanguage-proficiency-june-25-2025-110381.pdf

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