

March 2021 Update: News from Assessment and Student Information

Assessment in Spring 2021

On February 22, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) released [a letter outlining the Department's expectations for states regarding assessment, accountability, and reporting for the 2020–21 school year](#). The letter noted that ED “remain committed to supporting all states in assessing the learning of all students” and said “we are not inviting blanket waivers of assessments.” However, the letter did note some flexibilities and a willingness to work with states.

OSPI intends to pursue that flexibility by submitting a waiver request to ED to do a sampling methodology for the academic assessments. We believe we can meet the intent and spirit of the letter, while significantly reducing the impact of standardized testing on the education system this spring.

Rather than expecting to test all students in all of the typical grades and content areas, OSPI will propose to test a sample of Washington students in some grades and content areas. We will also take advantage of other flexibilities to reduce the impact of testing, such as shortening the spring Smarter Balanced Assessments by approximately 30%.

Statewide within each tested grade, only a fraction (a representative sample) of students would be expected to test and they would test in only one content area. In order to get a representative sample of the student population, all students within the sample would be expected to test, including students with disabilities and English learners. The specific sampling methodology has not yet been defined. It is likely to be school based, in the same way the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is done (some schools would be selected to test their students, other schools would not).

For the English language proficiency assessments there is less flexibility. **All students who are English learners who are receiving all or some in-person instruction or who are remote learning but can be safely brought into buildings are expected to take their annual tests for EL proficiency.**

In light of the waiver request and work to define the sampling methodology, **the Smarter Balanced testing window will NOT open on Monday, March 1.** We will provide more information in March regarding the testing window and which students/schools are in the sample. We anticipate testing will open sometime in April and close, as previously communicated, on June 4.

Washington's waiver request will be posted for public comment next week and subsequently submitted to ED. Although we cannot say with certainty whether the request will be approved,



we feel sampling is the best approach to get meaningful information this year AND significantly reduce the impact on students and schools from administering statewide assessments.

WCAS Accommodated Paper-Pencil Testing Supports Posted

The following supports have been developed to familiarize students, parents, and educators with the format and administration of accommodated paper forms for the Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science (WCAS) in grades 5, 8, and 11. Accommodated paper-pencil versions of the WCAS are designed for use with students who have a documented need on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan.

WCAS Accommodated Paper-Pencil Training Test Booklets include the same standalone items and item clusters (stimuli and item sets) as the WCAS Online Training Tests. Modifications have been made to some of the items and stimuli to maximize accessibility in the accommodated booklets while adhering to the original intent of the items and stimuli.

WCAS Accommodated Paper-Pencil Training Test Lesson Plans contain guidance and suggested activities for supporting student interaction with the item types and features of the accommodated paper-pencil booklets.

WCAS Glossaries of Non-Science Terms include non-science vocabulary used in the accommodated paper-pencil training test booklets that students may not be familiar with (e.g., above grade level, multiple meanings).

The supports are located on the WCAP Portal: [Accommodated Paper-Pencil Training Tests Supports: WCAS](#).

Planning for Graduation Pathways for the Class of 2020 and Beyond – Updated

Beginning with the Class of 2020, students must complete a graduation pathway in order to graduate. For students in the Classes of 2020 and 2021, the Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA) options are available to complete the pathway if determined as needed by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, but the CIA concludes with the Class of 2021. (RCW 28A.230.090 (1)(b))

This means that students in graduation cohorts of 2022 and beyond DO NOT have the Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA), resulting in the discontinuation of the following options for the purposes of meeting a graduation pathway:

- Off-grade level assessments (Smarter Balanced or WA-AIM)
- Level 2/Basic/CIA cut-scores
- Locally Determined Assessments (Woodcock Johnson Achievement Test, 3rd or 4th Edition, Wechsler Individual Achievement Test, 2nd, 3rd or 4th Edition, Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, 2nd or 3rd Edition) Grade Equivalencies

- Awareness Waivers

Per RCW 28A.655.250 and WAC 180-51-230, all students, including those receiving special education services, have the following options for completing at least one graduation pathway:

Students can complete any combination of one English Language Arts (ELA) and one Math option, or both subjects in any one of the graduation pathways listed below:

- State high school assessments (Smarter Balanced or WA-AIM)
- Dual credit courses (College in the High School, CTE or Running Start)
- Transition courses (Bridge to College or local articulation)
- Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or Cambridge International courses or exams
- SAT or ACT

Or complete one of the two options listed below:

- ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) , or online PiCAT (Pre-screening internet-delivered Computer Adaptive Test)
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) course sequence or Core Plus course

Awareness Waiver - Updated

Washington state is continuing the implementation of graduation pathways and discontinuing the options for a Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA) after the class of 2021. The following information is important for system leaders and IEP teams to know when planning and making graduation decisions for students with significant cognitive disabilities:

Guidance on the Engagement Rubric and Awareness Waivers	
Students in the Class of 2021 and Earlier	Students in the Class of 2022 and Beyond
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of an engagement rubric automatically resulted in an Awareness Waiver (WAC 392-501-705) waiving the assessment requirement of the CIA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The awareness waiver is discontinued. • The engagement rubric will continue to be used with all tested grade levels and cohorts as part of federal and state accountability testing. • Students who participate in the WA-AIM through the engagement rubric, may need additional support to satisfy the graduation pathway requirement. • Meeting the graduation cut scores through the standard administration of the WA-AIM will continue to serve as a potential pathway option.

Please watch for further opportunities to provide feedback to State Board of Education on what additional graduation pathways may be needed. Questions about the Awareness Waiver are best directed to graduation.pathways@k12.wa.us.

WA-AIM Assessment Window Extended to April 30, 2021 –

Repeat

The WA-AIM spring window is being extended to April 30, 2021. The extension is to support district efforts in adhering to local health protocols with scheduling testing of students returning to in-person instruction. Students receiving any in-person instruction are expected to participate in state assessments, including WA-AIM. Families of students in 100 percent remote instructional settings are to be informed of testing opportunities and expectations as well as current local health protocols to assist families in making decisions about bringing students into buildings for administration of state assessments. If you have any questions on the WA-AIM, please [contact Toni Wheeler](#).

All educators administering the WA-AIM should review relevant training modules located on the OSPI WA-AIM Training website. Experienced WA-AIM test administrators are expected to review the training modules due to recent enhancements to some systems and processes for Spring 2021. Information on these changes can be found in the following resources:

- [WA-AIM Test Administration Manual](#)
- [Performance Tasks](#)
- [Training Modules](#)