



SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

DR. TERRY BERGESON OLD CAPITOL BUILDING • PO BOX 47200 • OLYMPIA WA 98504-7200 • <http://www.k12.wa.us>

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Dear Parent/Guardian:

You are receiving this letter because you have a child in a special education program.

Every year, Washington students in grades 3-8 and 10 take statewide tests to help us make sure all students are learning. I need to tell you about a change to one of the statewide testing options for students in special education programs.

Until now, students in special education programs had the option of taking the Developmentally Appropriate WASL, also known as the WAAS-DAW. This option allowed students to take a test at a grade level that best matched their abilities. For example, an eighth-grader could take a fourth-grade reading test. We know this testing option was helpful to some students.

The U.S. Department of Education, which approves every state's testing program, recently told us that the Developmentally Appropriate WASL does not meet federal testing requirements. If we continue to offer this testing option, we will lose our state's federal money for our schools. We must make changes immediately.

Therefore, the Developmentally Appropriate WASL is no longer an option for students in grades 3-8 and 10. High school juniors and seniors, however, may still use it to meet one of the state's graduation requirements.

Someone from your child's Individual Education Program (IEP) team will be contacting you soon to talk about the best way to measure your child's learning growth during this spring's testing.

Sincerely,

Joe Willhoft
Assistant Superintendent, Assessment and Research



How Students in Special Education Participate in State Testing

*** UPDATED INFORMATION ***

This information sheet provides answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about students in special education and their participation in the **Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)** and/or the **Washington Alternate Assessment System (WAAS)**. For complete information, please see the "Guidelines for Participation and Testing Accommodations for Special Populations in State Assessment Programs": www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/Assessment.aspx. For help with additional WASL/WAAS questions, contact waas@ospi.wednet.edu or 360.725.6089.

Frequently Asked Questions: All Grades

How do students in special education participate in state testing?

The following options are available:

1. Take the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) without accommodations.
2. Take the WASL with accommodations that match the accommodations a student uses every day at school. All accommodations must be included in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).
3. Take the WASL-Modified (WASL-MO) – Students take the WASL at grade level but IEP teams determine if passing is adjusted from Proficient (Level 3) to Basic (Level 2). Testing accommodations are allowed but they must match the accommodations a student uses every day at school and must be included in a student's IEP.
4. Use the Washington Alternate Assessment System (WAAS) Portfolio – Students unable to participate in paper and pencil tests show their skills and knowledge through a collection of their work.

What kinds of accommodations are available to students with an IEP?

Please refer to the revised "Guidelines for Participation and Testing Accommodations for Special Populations in State Assessment Programs": www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/Assessment.aspx. Accommodations could include a reader for math or science, physical supports (e.g., special pencil, large-type test), time extensions, etc. All testing accommodations must match the accommodations a student uses every day at school and must be included in a student's IEP.

Who determines how a student participates in state testing?

The IEP team, which includes a student's parents, decides which testing tool to use, based on the student's abilities in each content area. The testing tool used may vary by content area. These decisions, as well as any decisions about accommodations for the student, are made during the annual IEP team meeting or, if the IEP team agrees, at a meeting closer to the testing period. All decisions must be documented in the student's IEP.

What information about the WASL/WAAS must be documented in a student's IEP?

1. A statement of any accommodations to be provided for state assessments. Statement must address:
 - o When these services will begin.
 - o The anticipated frequency, location and duration of those services.
2. If the IEP team determines the student will participate in an alternative assessment, a statement that names the assessment chosen and why that assessment is appropriate for the student.

What happens when a family and a school district disagree about which assessment tool is most appropriate for a student?

A family may use dispute resolution options available to them to resolve any disagreement they have with a school district regarding student participation in state or district assessments. Information on these options: www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/mediation.aspx.

***** Turn over for Frequently Asked Questions about
Students in Special Education and the New High School Graduation Requirement *****

[Frequently Asked Questions: High School Graduation Requirement](#)

How do students in special education participate in state testing and meet the new graduation requirement?

An IEP team determines how a student will participate in state testing. Those decisions then determine if a student will earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) or a Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA). Students must earn either the CAA or the CIA to graduate. Only students with a current IEP may earn a CIA. (Please see the OSPI publication, "Guidelines for Participation and Testing Accommodations for Special Populations in State Assessment Programs," available at www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/Assessment.aspx.)

How do students earn a CAA?

Students earn a CAA by passing the High School WASL (with or without testing accommodations) and/or the state-approved CAA Options in reading, writing and math. Students in the graduating classes of 2010 and beyond must also pass science. The CAA options include

- A comparison of student's grades in core classes with those who passed the test.
- A "collection of evidence" consisting of student work showing they meet grade-level academic standards.
- For math only, specific scores earned on the PSAT and the SAT and ACT college-entrance exams.

How do students earn a CIA?

As 10th-graders, students earn a CIA by passing the WASL-Modified (WASL-MO) or WAAS-Portfolio. In grades 11 and 12, students who have not yet earned a CIA may also access the Developmentally Appropriate WASL (WAAS-DAW). With the WAAS-DAW, students take the WASL at a grade level that best matches their abilities. To pass the WAAS-DAW, students must earn Proficient (Level 3) on each test taken. Testing accommodations used must be consistent with the student's IEP.

Do students who earn a CIA get a different diploma?

No. Earning a CIA leads to a "regular" diploma. The student's transcript, however, will note which certificate was earned.

Can students with a Section 504 Plan access the CIA?

No. Students with a Section 504 plan, however, can access accommodations available on the WASL. See pages 12 and 13 of "Guidelines for Participation and Testing Accommodations for Special Populations in State Assessment Programs," available at www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/Assessment.aspx.

Can a student earn a CAA in one content area and the CIA in another?

No. Students earn a CAA by passing the High School WASL and/or the state-approved CAA Options in reading, writing and math. Students who use the WASL-MO, WAAS-Portfolio or WAAS-DAW to pass any of the required subjects earn a CIA, not a CAA.

Can a student earn a CIA and then take the "regular" WASL to earn a CAA?

Yes. If a student earns a CIA and wants to pursue a CAA, s/he may do so by following the requirements and the options provided to any other student. If the student is unsuccessful at earning the CAA, his or her CIA would still meet the graduation requirement.

Why do results come back later for students who use an assessment other than the High School WASL?

The High School WASL is scored on an earlier schedule than all other WASL tests, allowing these test results to be returned to families by June. The WAAS-DAW and the portfolios are scored during the summer. Results are returned to families in September.

Do students who participate in the WAAS-DAW or the WAAS-Portfolio get retakes if they don't pass?

Like the students working toward a CAA, all students working toward a CIA have five state-funded opportunities to pass each subject (reading, writing and math). Students may retest with the WAAS-DAW or resubmit their WAAS-Portfolio during a special testing window in early November and during the following spring testing administration.

If a parent chooses not to have their child take the WASL and/or any of the WAAS options, can the student still earn a high school diploma?

No. All students must complete all state and local school district graduation requirements in order to graduate.

Will it be harder for a student to get into college or get a job with a CIA?

Community colleges and four-year universities currently do not use the WASL or WAAS in admission processes. Some, however, may look at scores when giving out merit scholarship money. Needs-based scholarships are not affected. Employers may or may not ask for a student's transcript when hiring.