

Alternative Assessments

Q: Will alternative assessments be available?

A: In House Bill 2195 (passed during the 2004 legislative session), the Legislature directed OSPI to develop “one or more alternative assessments” for students to demonstrate they have required skills in reading, math and writing. These alternative assessments are to be “comparable” in rigor to the WASL and measure the same skills and knowledge assessed on the WASL.

OSPI was directed to develop options for these alternative assessments and make recommendations to the Legislature for its approval. The alternative assessments cannot be implemented statewide without the approval of the Legislature. As a result, OSPI has been working with a statewide team to develop alternative assessment options. Two options are being analyzed and piloted in about 20 schools this year:

WASL/GPA: Two variations are under consideration. The first involves an index that considers the student’s math WASL score, for example, and a student’s GPA in core math courses that are aligned with the learning standards assessed on the WASL. In the index, a high GPA could compensate for a WASL score that’s just below the “passing” mark.

The second variation compares the student’s GPA in mathematics or language arts courses with the GPAs of other students who passed the WASL who took the same mathematics or language arts courses. If the student’s GPA is above the median GPA of this “cohort” of other students, the student would obtain a Certificate of Academic Achievement.

Collection of evidence: This involves compiling student work as evidence that the student has met the learning standards. The student work could include components of a student’s culminating project, writing assignments, problems involving mathematics content and processes, and other classroom work that demonstrates the knowledge and skills tested on the WASL. The collection of evidence would be required to meet specified criteria, and would be evaluated by state-level review teams consisting of teachers, principals and community representatives.

Q: For whom are the alternative assessments intended?

A: The purpose of the assessments is to provide students an additional means of demonstrating that they have the essential skills and knowledge. They are intended for students who have the required skills and knowledge, but who have not been able to demonstrate them on the WASL. The alternative assessments have the potential to be useful for students in career and technical programs, and for advanced English language learners who have difficulty demonstrating their skills and knowledge on the WASL. The alternatives are not being designed for students who DO NOT have the required skills and knowledge.

Q: Who is eligible to use an alternative assessment?

A: Under current law, students are required to take the WASL at least twice before accessing an alternative assessment.

Q: When will the alternative assessments be available?

A: OSPI will ask the Legislature to authorize the alternative assessments in the 2006 legislative session. If they are authorized, the alternative assessments will be available beginning in the 2006-07 school year.