

Overview: 2021 Assessment Data

Background

The federal government requires each state to test their students, using a statewide standardized assessment, each spring. Because of the pandemic, state assessments were cancelled nationwide in spring 2020, and flexibility was granted in 2021. To make the most of the limited in-person learning most students experienced in spring 2021, Washington moved the spring assessment to the fall, using a condensed version of the test.

Because students were assessed during a different time of year, using shorter tests, and in a different school year than when they learned the content, caution should be used when comparing the assessment results from fall 2021 to the results from previous or future years. To help put the data into context, we do make some general observations below.

Impacts of the pandemic aggravated opportunity gaps for some

All students were impacted by the pandemic, and different student groups were impacted to different degrees. Assessment data show opportunity gaps widened for students in families with lower incomes, as well as students who are multilingual.

Scores in math were more greatly impacted than in English language arts

Across grade levels, student scores in English language arts decreased slightly from 2019. In math, however, score decreases were greater for most student groups. The impact was observed across all student achievement levels, but was less for students in the highest score range, particularly in English language arts.

Students will return to regular annual testing this spring

We expected to see dips in scores on the fall assessments due to the disruptions of the pandemic on student learning and taking the tests after summer break. Given the fact that students are learning in-person, as well as the emphasis schools are placing on social-emotional well-being and learning recovery and acceleration, we fully expect scores from this spring to show progress.

