1. Test Purpose

The 2001 federal “No Child Left Behind” law mandates that states receiving federal funding for education conduct statewide reading and mathematics assessments in grades 3 through high school. The purpose of our reading assessment is to measure Washington students’ level of proficiency on Washington’s Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) and Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) in reading.

The reading assessments contain both literary and informational (including functional) passages. The passages range in total number of words and difficulty level and have items (questions) which assess proficiency as appropriate to the grade level being assessed. The reading test specifications for grades 4, 7, and 10 were first developed in 1996. The test specifications for grades 3, 5, 6, and 8 used grades 4, 7, and 10 as a reference point for their 2003 development.

2. Construction and Refinement of Reading Passages and Items

- **Passage Selection Process:**
  OSPI engages in a systematic process to find passages for the state Reading Assessment. OSPI’s reading assessment staff and OSPI’s assessment contractor search for appropriate published passages in libraries, on the internet, in children’s literature, anthologies, magazines, and in materials suggested by teachers. Passages are selected for content and grade-level appropriateness. The initial selection of passages by OSPI and contractor staff is just the first step in the selection process. A bias and sensitivity review follows the passage selection process.

- **Bias and Sensitivity Review I:**
  The next crucial step in the passage development process is a bias and sensitivity review. During this review, a committee made up of community members, business representatives and parents representing a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, analyzes each passage for partiality issues that may impact student performance on the state assessment. After each passage has met the criteria for bias and sensitivity review, it is now eligible to advance to the item writing process.

- **Item Writing:**
  During this step in the development process, a committee of Washington state educators conducts another thorough scrutiny of the passages. Teachers evaluate the passages with the same criteria used by OSPI and contractor staff. Their judgment on the appropriateness of the passage gives the “green light” to develop items for the passages. The committee receives training on the key elements of successful development of multiple-choice and constructed-response items. Scoring rubrics are developed for constructed-response items.

- **Item Review:**
  After the item writing committee, OSPI and our contractor complete an in-depth technical review of each item. During this item review, cognitive load and language are carefully analyzed and/or revised. Rubrics for constructed-response items are also analyzed and/or revised.

- **Content Review:**
  After OSPI and our contractor complete the item review, passages and items undergo yet another quality control check by a content review committee. This committee, facilitated by our contractor, is comprised of educators who have not been involved in the previous stages of the development process. This additional development step ensures that “fresh eyes” review the passages and items.

- **Bias and Sensitivity Review II:**
  A second bias and sensitivity review occurs. This time, the committee reviews the items for partiality issues that may impact student performance on the state assessment. After the items have met the criteria for bias and sensitivity review, the passages and items are now eligible to be placed on the assessment as embedded pilot items.
• **Pilot Rangefinding:**
  After the passages and items have been piloted by students in Washington State during the testing window, the pilot rangefinding committee, comprised of OSPI, educators, contractor staff, and scoring staff, reviews and rangefinds pilot completion, stand-alone and constructed-response items. Using student responses, the pilot rangefinding committee determines the scoring criteria for each constructed-response item. Items that have been successfully rangefound are then scored by professional scorers who have a minimum of a Bachelor’s degree.

• **Pilot Item Data Review:**
  This committee reviews all data from the reading assessment pilot items. Student performance data for the multiple-choice and constructed-response items is analyzed to determine eligibility for operational testing. Items are analyzed for appropriate performance parameters including difficulty level, ethnic performance, stability, validity, and trends and patterns. Passages and items that survive this pilot item data review process are determined to be eligible for operational use on the assessment.

• **Operational Rangefinding:**
  After the passages and items have been used operationally, they undergo another rangefinding process. This committee is also comprised of OSPI staff, educators, contractor staff, and scoring staff. The committee reviews and rangefinds operational constructed-response items. The operational rangefinding committee finalizes the scoring rubrics for the constructed-response items using student responses from the operational test. After operational rangefinding, items are scored by professional scorers.

• **Teacher Operational Scoring:**
  Beginning in 2001 Washington State educators have been involved in scoring writing, mathematics, science, and reading items that are due for release after scoring. Passages and items that have been used operationally at least twice are eligible to be released to the field to assist in professional development and improvement of student performance.

  See page [3](#) for more information

### 3. Strands and Targets Assessed on the Washington State Reading Assessment

Not every skill stated in the EALRs or the GLEs is measurable on a large-scale assessment such as the Washington State Reading Assessment. Therefore, the strands and targets identify the skills that can be captured in paper and pencil and computerized assessments. While most of the learning targets remain the same across grade levels, it is the complexity of the passages and items that increases, along with the number of items students are asked to respond to on the reading assessment.

The following 2 charts are the grades 3–high school assessed reading targets and their corresponding GLEs:
### Strands and Targets
#### Grades 3 - 5

Targets may be assessed using literary passages, informational passages or functional documents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Demonstrate understanding of theme/message/main or major idea and supporting details</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Targets</td>
<td>(Reading GLE 2.1.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Summarize with evidence from the text</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Reading GLE 2.1.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Make or confirm inferences or predictions based on the text</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Reading GLE 2.1.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Understand and apply content vocabulary critical to the meaning of the text</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Reading GLE 1.3.2, 1.2.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Order steps, sequence, and/or events/process from the text</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Reading GLE 2.2.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Literary Specific: Demonstrate understanding of authors' use of literary elements (character, setting, plot, genre, etc.) and literary devices (simile, metaphor, alliteration, personification, etc.)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Targets</td>
<td>(Reading GLEs 2.2.3, 2.3.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informational/Functional Specific: Demonstrate understanding of authors' use of text features (titles, headings, captions, maps, charts, tables, graphs, pull-down menus, etc.)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Reading GLE 2.2.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>Compare and contrast using elements of the text(s)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Reading GLE 2.3.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>Make connections (cause and effect) within a text</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Reading GLE 2.3.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>Analyze usefulness of resources</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Reading GLEs 2.3.2, 3.1.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Analyze author’s purpose (including distinguishing between fact and opinion) and evaluate effectiveness for different audiences</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Reading GLEs 2.4.2, 2.4.3, 2.4.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Extend information beyond text—make generalizations beyond the text to a broader idea or concept</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Reading GLEs 2.4.1, 2.4.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Functional Documents Include:**
- Hobby Magazines
- E-mail
- Friendly Letters
- Letters to the Editor
- Newsletters, Schedules
- Brochures
- Advertisements, Catalogs
- Web Sites
- Credit and Job Applications
- Purchased goods and services
- Contracts, Procedures, Directions

**Informational Passages Include:**
- Historical Documents
- Nonfiction Magazine
- Newspaper Articles
- Excerpts or Articles from Social Studies Or Science Text Narratives

**Literary Passages Include:**
- Stories
- Poems
- Novel Excerpts
- Biographies, Autobiographies
- Literary Essays
**Strands and Targets**

**Grades 6-High School**

Targets may be assessed using literary passages, informational passage or functional documents.  
*Reading Grade Level Expectations (GLEs)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>4 Targets</th>
<th>4 Targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 01 | Demonstrate understanding of theme/message/main idea and supporting details  
(Reading GLE 2.1.3) | |
| 02 | Summarize with evidence from the text  
(Reading GLE 2.1.7) | |
| 03 | Make or confirm inferences or predictions based on the text  
(Reading GLE 2.1.5) | |
| 04 | Understand and apply content vocabulary critical to the meaning of the text  
(Reading GLE 1.3.2) | |
| Analysis | 4 Targets | |
| 05 | Literary Specific: Demonstrate understanding of authors' use of literary elements  
(character, setting, plot, genre, point of view, etc.) and literary devices (simile, metaphor, alliteration, personification, etc.)  
(Reading GLEs 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.3.3) | |
| | Informational/Functional Specific: Demonstrate understanding of authors' use of text features (titles, headings, captions, maps, charts, tables, graphs, pull-down menus, etc.)  
(Reading GLE 2.2.2) | |
| 06 | Compare and contrast using elements of the text(s)  
(Reading GLEs 2.3.1, 2.4.6) | |
| 07 | Make connections (cause and effect) within a text  
(Reading GLE 2.3.1) | |
| 08 | Analyze usefulness of resources  
(Reading GLEs 2.3.2, 3.1.1) | |
| Critical Thinking | 3 Targets | |
| 09 | Analyze author's purpose and evaluate effectiveness for different audiences (includes fact/opinion; author's style, tone, and use of persuasive devices)  
(Reading GLEs 2.4.2, 2.4.3, 2.4.4) | |
| 10 | Evaluate reasoning and ideas/themes to draw conclusions and develop insights related to the text  
(Reading GLEs 2.4.1, 2.4.5) | |
| 11 | Extend information beyond text, (make generalizations beyond the text to a broader idea or concept, or apply information to other texts and situations, and support the generalization with details from the text)  
(Reading GLEs 2.4.1, 2.4.5) | |

**Functional Documents Include:**
- Hobby Magazines, E-mail
- Friendly Letters, Letters to the Editor
- Newsletters, Schedules
- Brochures, Advertisements,
- Catalogs, Web Sites, Credit and Job Applications
- Purchased goods and services
- Contracts, Procedures, Directions

**Informational Passages Include:**
- Historical Documents
- Nonfiction Magazines
- Newspaper Articles
- Excerpts or Articles from Social Studies
- Or Science Narratives

**Literary Passages Include:**
- Stories
- Poems
- Novel Excerpts
- Biographies
- Autobiographies
- Literary Essays
4. General Considerations for Test Item Construction

Reading test items should always focus on what is essential and consequential in a given text. Test items on the reading assessment are of the following types:

- **Multiple-choice:** Students choose from three (grades 3–5) or four (grades 6–High School) answer options (worth 1 point each).
- **Constructed-response**
  - **Short answer:** Students construct short responses, phrases or sentences, to items regarding comprehension of the reading passage(s) (worth 2 points each).
  - **Completion:** Students write in a word or phrase to complete a sentence, fill in the blank or complete a graphic organizer (worth 1 point).
  - **Stand-alone:** Students answer an independent item focused on a specific skill (worth 1 point). Self-contained items that are not connected to a passage. They appear as multiple-choice or completion.

**General guidelines for multiple-choice and constructed-response items:**

- Test items are written to cover as many learning targets as the passages allow.
- Each item assesses a specific learning target.
- Items are worded precisely and clearly. The better focused an item, the more reliable and fair it is certain to be, and the more likely students will understand what is required of them.
- Items are reviewed to eliminate unfair representations of gender, race, individuals with disabilities, and cultural or religious groups.
- Items avoid language that shows bias or is otherwise likely to be offensive to or to disadvantage, a particular group of students.
- Test items are tied closely and are clearly related to the passage they reference so that the impact of background (prior) knowledge is minimized.
- Items are presented in a logical order.

**Multiple-choice items:**

- Multiple-choice items for grades 3 through 5 contain a question with three answer options, only one of which is correct. Correct answers are distributed as evenly as possible among A’s, B’s, and C’s.
- Multiple-choice items for grades 6 through high school contain four answer options, only one of which is correct. Correct answers are distributed as evenly as possible among A’s, B’s, C’s, and D’s.
- The three or four options are approximately the same length, have the same format, and are syntactically and semantically parallel; students should not be able to rule out a wrong answer or identify a correct response simply by virtue of it looking or sounding different from other choices.
- Distractors are carefully worded so that students must think their way to the correct answer rather than simply identify incorrect responses by virtue of a distractor’s obviously inappropriate nature.
- Distractors should always be plausible (but incorrect) in the context of the selection.
- To the greatest extent possible, no item or response choice “clues” the answer to any other item.

**Constructed-response items:**

- **Short answer and completion:**
  - Constructed-response items clearly indicate the expected student response.
  - An item-specific scoring rubric is developed for each short answer and completion item. Information from the pilot is used to refine these scoring rubrics which are used to score the final forms of the assessment.
  - Short answer items are scored (0, 1, or 2). Nine lines are provided for student responses.
  - Completion items area scored (0 or 1). Blank lines or a graphic organizer are provided for student responses.
  - When a short answer item has two parts, the parts may appear separately with lines following each part (scaffolding). This encourages students to notice and answer both parts of the item.

**Stand-alone:**

- Stand-alone items follow the guidelines for multiple-choice or completion items.
- Provide enough context to limit the amount of background knowledge needed to successfully answer.
Each test form includes literary and informational (including functional) passages.

Passages may be comprised of:

- A literary passage or a biography/autobiography.
- A poem.
- An informational passage focused on science content.
- An informational passage focused on social studies content.
- An informational passage that is a functional document.

Grades 3-5 have a combination of 4-5 passages.

Grades 6-high school have a combination of 5-6 passages one of which is a pair. The pair will consist of some combination of the following:

- A poem and a literary passage.
- An informational passage and another informational passage.
- A literary passage and an informational passage.
- A literary passage and another literary passage.

Whatever the pairing combination, the two passages are linked by a similar subject or idea. Students are then asked to compare and contrast ideas between passages.

With paired passages, specific items are written for each and follow each passage. Additional items requiring comparison between the passages appear last, after both passages. Constructed-response items could be asked about individual passages in addition to the passages as a pair.

Sample reading assessment stems (item templates) and scoring rubrics for grades 3-high school may be downloaded from the following OSPI Web site:
http://www.k12.wa.us/Reading/Assessment/default.aspx

The following test characteristics matrix outlines the number of passages, items and points on each reading assessment:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>3, 4, and 5</th>
<th>6, 7 and 8</th>
<th>HS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approximate time</td>
<td>One 75 minute session</td>
<td>One 90 minute session</td>
<td>One 120 minute session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(adjust as needed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational passages</td>
<td>4-5 passages</td>
<td>4-6 passages</td>
<td>5 passages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approximately 1,200-2,200 words per test</td>
<td>Approximately 2,500-4,000 words per test</td>
<td>Approximately 4,500-6,000 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total items</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total points possible</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-point items</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Multiple-choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Completion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Stand-alone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-point items</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Short answer items</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning strands</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Comprehension</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Literary and Informational)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Analysis</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Literary and Informational)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Critical Thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Literary and Informational)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6-HS only)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of one-point*</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of two-point *</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot items**</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages vary across grade levels due to total points possible and total number of items on the assessment.

** This will be a combination of one and two-point items. Performance on pilot items does not impact overall score. Pilot passage and items are not considered part of the operational test.