



SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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

June 10, 2003

() Action Required

(X) Informational

MEMORANDUM NO. 39-03M LEARNING AND TEACHING

TO: Educational Service District Superintendents
Chief School District Administrators
School Principals
School District Assessment Coordinators
School Public Relations Professionals

FROM: Dr. Terry Bergeson, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

RE: Planning for a State Standardized Testing Schedule in Grade 10

The use of Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) results will be changing within the next several years. We developed the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) in the early 1990s with a broad base of excellent educators, business and community leaders, parents, and at the 10th grade level, high school students. We are now teaching to the EALRs and measuring results with classroom assessments, projects, and, of course, the WASL. However, while we have excellent standards and a high quality assessment, we have not communicated the importance of the skills or the state assessment well enough to motivate all of our 10th graders.

As you may recall, during the September 2002 WASL score release, I noted that many high school students in the 2002 test administration did not attempt to answer a large number of open-ended questions requiring important problem-solving and communication skills. Additionally, compared to other grade levels, more than twice as many 10th graders weren't tested or openly refused to take the WASL. According to reports from teachers and administrators, this situation improved during the spring 2003 testing.

In order for the WASL to be credible for 10th grade students, they need to see the relevance of the results to their future, be it a job or admission to higher education. Last year the colleges received data from the University of Washington Study on the viability of using the WASL as a predictor of college success that piqued their interest. The community colleges and the baccalaureates are now interested in using the results for actual placement and/or for early college recruitment.

Increased standardization of the high school administration schedule and conditions of testing are necessary to instill confidence in the instrument and the scores. For colleges wanting to use this information as a part of admission decisions, we need to increase the security of the test, thus giving college admission officers greater confidence in the assessment results. The narrowed window we propose in this memorandum is patterned after the Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate end-of-course assessments. As the WASL becomes both a benchmark for high school graduation and a gateway to future education and career opportunities, it is important that we create a level playing field in the administration of the assessment.

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A uniform testing schedule for the administration of the WASL **in high school** will keep the test content more secure, and will increase the confidence in the reliability and accuracy of individual student scores. This uniform test administration must be in place no later than spring 2006 when passing the WASL is scheduled to be a graduation requirement. This will have students taking the same test on the same date at the same time according to the required schedule.

Presently, we try to sandwich the WASL testing between spring break and Advanced Placement testing. As the WASL 10th grade administration window is narrowed, we will work with school districts, the Association of Washington School Principals, and the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association to minimize scheduling conflicts. We must respect the need for these agencies to set their calendars years in advance.

Other issues need to be addressed as well, including retakes, so high school teachers who are helping students with academic interventions can give those kids another opportunity to take the test. If we want students and their teachers to take the WASL seriously, we must have policies and procedures that build positive motivation, not just sanctions like the loss of a diploma. For the spring 2004 WASL administration, a voluntary common 10th grade schedule is proposed. Please review the attached and provide Paul Dugger with your advice and feedback regarding this proposal and share this information with administrators and staff, especially those who have responsibilities for the school calendar or scheduling school events. Paul can be reached at 360.725.6348 or TTY 360.664.3631 or by email at pdugger@ospi.wednet.edu.

This memorandum is also available on the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Website at the following URL: <http://www.k12.wa.us/bulletinsmemos/>.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Mary Alice Heuschel
Deputy Superintendent
Learning and Teaching

Greg Hall
Assistant Superintendent
Assessment and Research

Paul Dugger
State Assessment Coordinator

TB:pwd

Attachment

Proposed Schedule for Grade 10

Tests are scheduled to begin at 8:00 A.M. The estimated working times will be revised using input from the Spring 2003 Teacher Questionnaire forms.

Week 1 Tests		Estimated Student Working Time
Tuesday April 20, 2004	Math—Session One (with tools)	80–90 minutes
Wednesday April 21, 2004	Math—Session Two (without tools)	80–90 minutes
Thursday April 22, 2004	Writing—Session One	70–90 minutes
Friday April 23, 2004	Reading —Session One	50–70 minutes

Week 2 Tests		Estimated Student Working Time*
Tuesday April 27, 2004	Writing—Session Two	70–90 minutes
Wednesday April 28, 2004	Reading —Session Two	50–70 minutes
Thursday April 29, 2004	Science—Session One	80–90 minutes
Friday April 30, 2004	Science—Session Two	80–90 minutes

*Allow approximately 15 minutes of additional time for administrative details associated with giving the test.