

Washington's Assessment & Accountability Strategic Waiver Request: 2020–21 School Year

Background & Intent

The U.S. Department of Education issued a process for states to submit requests to waive some requirements for assessment and accountability in the 2020–21 school year. While some flexibility on requirements is being considered, the Department of Education is not inviting full waiver requests. This document includes key points of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) request for a waiver to meet federal requirements.

The proposed student assessment plan for spring 2021 aims to drastically reduce testing burdens on students, families, schools, and school districts across Washington while also fulfilling the need to obtain precise, representative estimates of students' academic proficiency levels.

Key Components of the Waiver Request

- We will test a statistically representative sample of approximately 50,000 students, rather than full-scale testing of all students who typically participate (700,000 students). Assessments would be in five grade levels, with only one subject per grade level.
- We will report overall statewide results, as well as for specific student groups.
- An English language proficiency assessment will be administered to all state-identified English learners.
- Schools currently identified for improvement supports under ESSA will maintain that status in the 2021–22 school year.

More Information about the Request

- The following grades and content areas will be assessed:
 - Grades 3 and 7: English language arts (Smarter Balanced and WA-AIM)
 - Grades 5 and 10: mathematics (Smarter Balanced and WA-AIM)
 - Grade 8: science (WCAS and WA-AIM)
- The Smarter Balanced assessment (ELA & Math) is approximately 2/3 the length of the typical administration
- All students and schools will be eligible to be included in the sample, including students with disabilities and English learners.
- Within each grade, approximately 12% of schools would be randomly selected to be in the sample.
- All assessments will be completed in-person (no remote administration).



Benefits of Washington's Approach

- Reduced state assessments allow districts to prioritize instructional time and classroom-based assessments to gauge student progress.
- Increased emphasis on district-determined assessments, which will inform student learning recovery and acceleration plans.
- Provides an accurate statewide estimate of students' proficiency levels, as well as changes in proficiency levels pre- and post-pandemic.

Sampling Methodology

OSPI collaborated with the University of Washington to design a stratified two-stage cluster sampling plan to represent students in Washington's public schools. The sample will be representative of each student group reported according to the state's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Plan.

The sampling plan for each of the five grade levels involves stratifying districts by their educational service district (ESD), and then randomly sampling 50% of districts in each ESD (stage 1). Of those districts selected, 25% of schools would then be randomly selected for participation (stage 2). All students in that grade level within selected schools would be assessed on the appropriate grade-specific subject test.

Timeline of Public Comment and Waiver Submission

Public comment is open March 16–22, 2021. Comments should be submitted via the [2021 Assessment Waiver Public Comment survey](#), by 5 pm on March 22, 2021.

Feedback will be incorporated into the waiver request and will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education on March 23, 2021.

Assessment Windows

The Smarter Balanced Assessment window will be April 5 through June 11, WCAS will be April 12 through June 11, and WA-AIM is open through April 30.

Questions

Please send your questions about Washington's waiver request to assessmentwaivercomments@k12.wa.us.