

Fact Sheet:

Fall 2021 State Assessment Plan

Background

On March 25, 2021, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) [submitted a proposal](#) to the U.S. Department of Education (Department) to reduce the number of students who take state tests this spring, as well as the number of hours spent on those tests. Instead of testing all of the students who typically participate (about 700,000 students), OSPI proposed to test a statistically representative sample of approximately 50,000 students.

Current Context

Although the Department granted OSPI a waiver for some accountability requirements — including the need to identify schools for support using data from 2020–21 and the expected 95% participation rate on state assessments — they were not supportive of OSPI’s sampling approach related to assessments.

As of the end of March, nearly two-thirds of elementary students, and just under half of middle and high school students, in Washington were receiving at least some of their instruction each week in-person in their school buildings. These numbers are expected to grow over the coming weeks, as Governor Inslee has required [through an emergency proclamation](#) that every student in grades K–12 be provided the opportunity to learn in-person at least two days per week by April 19, 2021.

Decision on Testing

State Superintendent Chris Reykdal has decided Washington state **will not** administer Smarter Balanced Assessments or the Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science in spring 2021. Standardized testing this spring will not support our students’ mental health and is not the best use of our limited remaining in-person instructional time this school year.

In addition, without a rigorous sampling methodology, state assessments this spring would yield inequitable access to supports for remote learners, a substantial number of students and families opting out, and results would not be reliable or actionable.

Spring 2021

Smarter Balanced Assessments and the Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science will not be available for testing this spring.

The WA-AIM, ELPA21, and WIDA Alternate Access assessment windows have already opened, and students have been testing.



- WA-AIM, the state assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, will remain open until June 11. We will consider the flexibility of reopening the window this fall as well.
- All state-identified English learners will still be required to take the ELPA21 or WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessment this spring with an extended testing window that closes on June 4. Maintaining the timeline for these tests will provide students with the ability to exit the bilingual program in a timely manner, and will provide school districts, educators, and families access to data supporting students' meaningful participation in educational programs with core content instruction.

OSPI recognizes many school districts are utilizing local diagnostics and assessments this spring, and encourages use of the Interim Comprehensive Assessment (ICA). The ICA is comparable to the summative assessment and can provide a score on the same scale as the summative. Focused interim assessments are also available and can provide information on students' understanding of specific content standards.

High school students seeking to pursue the state assessments as a graduation pathway will have opportunities to do so in the 2021–22 school year. Students seeking to graduate this spring may pursue an emergency waiver if needed.

Finally, schools currently identified for improvement supports under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) will maintain that status in the 2021–22 school year.

Planning for Fall 2021

OSPI has already entered a planning process to explore:

- A fall assessment window consistent with federal requirements.
- The need to substantially reduce the length of state assessments in the fall and beyond.
- A review of the innovative assessment waiver options that several states have secured over many years.
- A review of all federal and state laws that will need to be changed to transform our assessment system to one that better informs students, families, and educators, and provides for meaningful state accountability metrics.

OSPI will soon engage stakeholders to plan for the administration of the Smarter Balanced Assessments and the Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science in the fall. Additional details will be shared over the coming months.