

REYKDAL: Students Will Not Take State Tests This Spring

On March 25, 2021, OSPI submitted a proposal to the U.S. Department of Education to reduce the number of students who take state tests this spring, as well as the number of hours spent on those tests. Below is State Superintendent Chris Reykdal's statement.

OLYMPIA—April 14, 2021—After submitting [accountability and state assessment waiver applications](#) to the U.S. Department of Education (Department) in March, it is clear that the needs of the students of the State of Washington cannot be achieved through the current design of the Department's waiver process. Washington has been granted an accountability waiver, but thus far has not received the flexibility students, families, and educators need for spring assessments.

I have made the determination that Washington state will not be administering the Smarter Balanced Assessments or the Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science this spring. Instead, our assessment window for the 2020–21 school year will be in the fall – a timeline consistent with guidance provided by the Department to satisfy federal testing requirements.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has already entered a planning process to explore:

- 1) A fall assessment window consistent with federal requirements;
- 2) The need to substantially reduce the length of state assessments in the fall and beyond;
- 3) A review of the innovative assessment waiver options that several states have secured over many years; and
- 4) 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.

We will continue to use locally determined assessments that are more informative and actionable measures of student learning as we prepare for next school year and beyond.

The federally mandated testing system that has been driving too much local decision-making for the past 20 years is not achieving the intended result of closing opportunity and achievement gaps. To be clear, we are closing gaps, but it is the everyday work of families, educators, school and district leaders, and community partners that's having the biggest impact. Summative assessments are one way to measure our progress, but they should no longer drive our strategies.

Washington state put forward a bold and rigorous method to address state-level accountability that can be delivered at a fraction of the cost and a fraction of the time we currently spend testing our students. 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 that would not be reliable or actionable.

I want to thank the Department of Education for their consistent communication over the past several weeks. In the end, we had different values. They were seeking to test as many students as possible this spring, and we know this approach did not support the mental health of Washington's students; nor is it the best use of our limited remaining in-person instructional hours this spring.

I look forward to working with the Department, members of Congress, and the State Legislature to craft an accountability and assessment system that is focused on student learning and the needs of educators to engage their students with timely and relevant supports.

Educators across the state can now focus on engaging their students and families over the last two months of school; supporting their academic and social-emotional needs as we prepare for a comprehensive opening of our public schools this fall.