



# Washington Alternate Assessment System: Portfolio Assessment

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# **How do we educate children with significant cognitive disabilities?**



# Historical Perspective: Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities (SCD)

## **Before the 1970s**

- Keep children with SCD in institutions

## **Early 1970s**

- Bring students with SCD into public schools
- Teach all students with SCD the early childhood (preschool and kindergarten) curriculum

## **1980s**

- Teach functional and life skills

## **1990s**

- Ensure social inclusion, self-determination, and assistive technology

## **2000 - present**

- Provide access to general academic curriculum as well as functional skills, social skills, self determination, and assistive technology

## Continuum of Cognitive Development and Relationship to State Assessments

### **ABSTRACT CONCEPTUAL:**

Reads, interprets, and analyzes grade level text; understands and applies grade level mathematics concepts, procedures, and reasoning skills; communicates effectively in writing.

### **WASL-Proficient Level**

(Grades 3-12)

### **CONCRETE CONCEPTUAL:**

Reads and comprehends adapted grade level text or below-grade level text; masters a limited number of grade level or below grade level mathematics concepts, procedures and thinking skills; communicates ideas in writing.

### **WASL-Basic Level (level 2)**

(Grades 3-8, 10-12)

### **Developmentally Appropriate WASL**

**(DAW)** (Grades 11-12)

### **Locally Determined Assessment (LDA)**

(Grade 12)

## Continuum of Cognitive Development (cont.)

### ABSTRACT SYMBOLIC:

Reads sight words and picture cues; writes sight words or uses picture symbols to communicate; counts objects and recognizes symbolic numbers; comprehends adaptive texts.

### EARLY SYMBOLIC:

Recognizes pictures; may also use a range of pictures/objects to communicate ideas.

### PRE-SYMBOLIC:

Uses objects or gestures to communicate; relies on immediate context to use objects to communicate.

### AWARENESS:

Limited consciousness and/or communication.

### **WAAS Portfolio**

(Grades 3-8, 10-12)

### **“Awareness” Waiver**

(Grades 11-12)

# Who participates in the WAAS-Portfolio?



- **Only students with significant cognitive disabilities can be assessed using alternate achievement standards.**
- **The term “significant cognitive disabilities” describes cognitive impairments that prevent a student from attaining grade-level performance standards, even with the very best instruction and most extensive accommodations.**

# 2007-2008 Scored Portfolios



## **Grades 3-8**

- Grade 3: 810
- Grade 4: 790
- Grade 5: 709
- Grade 6: 722
- Grade 7: 661
- Grade 8: 706

## **Grades 10-12**

- Grade 10: 649
- Grade 11: 230
- Grade 12: 231

All Grades Total in 2007-2008: 5,515

# **What changes were made to the 2007-08 Portfolio?**



**Substantial changes to the Portfolio in 2007-08**

**Some changes were due to Federal NCLB requirements**

**Most changes were in response to teacher concerns about time, burden, and validity of the Portfolio**

# WAAS Portfolio 2001-2007

- **Mostly focused on students' educational experiences:**
  - Does the teacher give the student choices?
  - Is the student engaged with typically developing peers?
  - Is the student in a variety of contexts?
  - Does the student have access to assistance (technical and human)
- **Little focus on student learning** (one skill per content area)
- **Labor intensive for teachers**
  - Teachers had to “stage” situations to demonstrate evidence for each aspect of educational experiences
  - Teachers needed to submit five pieces of evidence per skill, each collected at a different time

# Portfolio Beginning with 2007-2008

## Portfolio Requirements & Processes

- ⊙ Manual has been revised for ease-of-use
- ⊙ Forms have been simplified
- ⊙ Removed requirement for evidence of educational experiences
- ⊙ Development of specific GLE extensions: grade level standards for students with significant cognitive disabilities
- ⊙ Evidence of learning for 2 skills per content area, but only three observations per skill
- ⊙ Scoring Rubric has been simplified
- ⊙ Tied more closely to IEP goals
- ⊙ Provided year-long professional development via peer coaching

# **Portfolio Beginning with 2007-2008**

(based on teacher input)

## **Scores given to Student Work in Portfolios:**

- **Skill Scores:** Did the student meet the goal, set by the IEP team, for each skill?
- **Context Scores:** Did the student demonstrate the skill in more than one context?

# **What are the challenges for implementing WAAS Portfolios?**



**Strengthening the links among state content standards (GLE extensions), IEPs, instruction, and alternate assessment.**

**Overcoming the history/tradition of teaching a life skills curriculum unrelated to reading, writing, math, and science.**

# Overcoming some myths about the Portfolios and students with significant cognitive disabilities?

**Myth #1:** “Teachers must choose between teaching academic and functional skills.”

**Myth #2:** “Children with significant cognitive disabilities can’t learn academic skills.”

**Myth #3:** “The Portfolio isn’t connected to the IEP.”

## **Myth #1: “Teachers have to choose between teaching academic and functional skills.”**

- Development in the content areas are functional skills.
- Literacy and numeracy are the MOST functional skills in our society today:
  - Financial independence depends on fundamental math skills
  - Ability to process the written messages in the world around us depends on basic reading skills
- Other functional skills (social, motor, behavior, communication and daily life skills) can be taught within general education activities.

## **Myth #2: “Children with significant cognitive disabilities (SCD) can’t learn academic skills”**

- This myth has no research supporting this claim.
- Research does show that academic assessments do lead to higher expectations and achievement for students with SCD.
- IDEA states that the IEP must include goals that:
  - Enable the student to make progress in the general education curriculum
  - Meet the child’s other educational needs resulting from the disability
- Educators have a professional obligation to support the cognitive development of all children.
- The challenge is determining how, not whether, students with SCD will develop in reading, writing, math, and science.

## **Myth #3: “The WAAS Portfolio isn’t connected to the IEP”**

- GLE Extensions provide a way for IEP teams to select a relevant targeted skill for students with SCD.
- How well the students needs to perform on the targeted skill is defined by the IEP team.
- Portfolios are scored based on whether the student met the goal on the targeted skill.

# How does the Portfolio benefit students with SCD?

- Clarified expectations for the student's cognitive growth, leading to higher levels of learning
- The student is more connected to the general education curriculum
- Schools are more accountable to parents for the student's learning

# What is next for the WAAS Portfolio?



**CLARIFICATION**

**GUIDANCE**

**SUPPORT**

# **Portfolio Training Focus for 2008-2009**

## **Refinement and Enhancement**

### **CLARIFICATION**

- Address confusion about what is required in a Portfolio
- Develop and disseminate materials that help parents better understand the Portfolios

### **GUIDANCE and SUPPORT**

- Provide teachers with specific examples of Portfolios aligned with the GLE Extensions and with IEPs
- Continue professional development activities in each ESD
- Continue peer coaching, including preview/review of 2008-09 Portfolios

# What Do Other States Do?

## **Portfolios**

## **Standardized Performance Tasks**

- **Stand-alone Tasks**
- **Tasks with Observational Checklists**

# How are different states assessing students with SCD?

## Portfolios

### Washington

- 5,500 students; \$1.5M per yr.
- \$275/student

### Alabama

- 5,500 students; \$1.5M per yr.
- \$275/student

### Delaware

- 1,100 students; \$500K per yr.
- \$450/student

### Maine

- 1,375 students; \$1M per yr.
- \$725/student

### Massachusetts

- 8,000 students; \$3M per yr.
- \$375/student

### Nevada

- 2,000 students; \$500K per yr.
- \$250 per student

### New Jersey

- 7,000 students; \$4M per yr.
- \$575 per student

# How are different states assessing students with SCD?

## Standardized Performance Tasks

### **California**

- **42,000 students; \$2.5M per yr.**
- **\$60/student**

### **Arkansas**

- **3,300 students; \$1.6M per yr.**
- **\$500/student**

### **Montana**

- **700 students; \$500K per yr.**
- **\$715/student**

### **South Carolina**

- **2,500 students; \$1.4M per yr.**
- **\$550/student**