

Over the last five months, the Workgroup has heard presentations from assessment experts, testing vendors, state officials in Washington and other states, and school districts about the current status of statewide assessment systems. This information, along with other information gathered and provided in response to questions by members of the Workgroup, can be summarized as follows:

1. Many states are dissatisfied with their current statewide assessment systems. A common source of dissatisfaction is that the assessments do not provide classroom teachers with feedback in a form or a timeframe that they believe sufficiently helps improve instruction. Nevertheless, all states must have assessments that meet the requirements of NCLB.
2. Another common source of dissatisfaction is cost - costs to develop, administer, and score.
3. There is a high perceived value of diagnostic and formative assessments that provide teachers, parents, and students with immediate feedback about student progress, predict student performance on statewide assessments, and assist teachers in identifying specific areas where students need extra help or should be exposed to more challenging material. However, these assessments are usually not well suited for use as a statewide summative assessment, and may not be approved under NCLB.
4. There are no "quick fixes" to a statewide assessment system. Tests and test items cannot be purchased off the shelf without adaptation. A "new" test cannot replace an "old" test without development and pilot-testing to verify the comparability, reliability, and validity of the results. Sudden wholesale change threatens to throw the education system - the teachers, the curriculum, the scope and sequence of instruction - into chaos and uncertainty. Caution must be exercised to prevent the unintended consequence of changing or removing an assessment that has had a positive impact on instruction.
5. The Legislature has already begun to take steps to improve the assessment system: the WASL in grades 3-8 has been shortened; additional accommodations and translations have been authorized; there are new math and science standards; development of an end-of-course assessment for high school math is beginning. These initiatives should be fully implemented to gauge their impact.

The Workgroup was created to examine Washington's assessment system and make recommendations to improve it. Based on the evidence presented, the following recommendations are proposed:

Long-Term Recommendations

1. Direct the State Board of Education to examine opportunities to shorten the 10th grade assessment in Reading and Writing without reducing rigor, reliability, or validity. Undertake an additional review of the cultural sensitivity of the assessment.

RECOMMENDATION #3

2. Require OSPI to develop professional development opportunities in the appropriate use of different types of assessments and assessment results.
3. Direct the State Board of Education to review the existing statewide assessments in grades 3 - 8 in Reading, Writing, Math, and Science and make recommendations to replace the current assessment with an assessment that would:
 - Align with state standards
 - Be administered on-line
 - Use less class time for administration
 - Have results available more quickly for teachers and parents
 - Be culturally sensitive
4. Ensure that all assessment data is made available on the new student data system.

Short-Term Recommendations

1. Maintain the current graduation requirement for Reading and Writing. Review the current timelines for implementation of the new high school Math EOCs and consider adjusting (not removing) the graduation requirement timeline for consistency. Consider making the graduation requirement contingent on a finding of validity and reliability of the exam rather than a fixed date. Consider the same policy for science, based on possible adoption of an end-of-course exam.
2. Direct the State Board of Education to examine the possibility of purchasing and adapting an existing end-of-course assessment for high school science.
3. Continue to provide alternative assessment options for students who are not good at taking standardized tests and for career and technical education students in rigorous programs leading to state and national certification.
4. Direct the State Board of Education (in conjunction with OSPI's Technical Advisory Committee) to analyze the pros and cons of making the current WASL in grades 3 - 8 all multiple choice, including the possibility of limiting this only to some subjects (Math or Science as opposed to Reading and Writing). In the meantime, carefully monitor and analyze the impact of the changes to the WASL that have already been authorized but not yet implemented.
5. Create a consistent policy (and funding scheme) to support statewide diagnostic and formative assessments in grades 3-10 in reading, writing, math, and science.