

## **Tenth-Grade Alternate Assessments for Special Populations: Summary Results**

The 2006 Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) to conduct a “review and statistical analysis of Washington assessment of student learning data.”<sup>1</sup> An interim report is due by December 2006 and a final report by December 2007.

Students must now meet standard on the 10th-grade Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) to graduate from public schools in Washington State. A student in special education with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) may participate in the state assessment system in the following ways:

- the “unmodified” WASL;
- the WASL-Modified; or
- the Washington Alternate Assessment System (WAAS), which consists of two options:
  - ✓ Developmentally Appropriate WASL (WAAS-DAW), or
  - ✓ WAAS-Portfolio.<sup>2</sup>

In spring 2006, 3,595 students (4.4 percent of all 10th-grade students) were scheduled to participate in one of these alternate assessments.

Tenth-grade students who meet state learning standards on the WASL-Modified or WAAS receive a Certificate of Individual Achievement. Students who meet standard on the unmodified WASL earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement. Both certificates are approved pathways to a regular high school diploma.

### **This report describes the use of alternate assessments in spring 2006.**

Alternate assessments for special populations are an important component of the Washington State Assessment System, as they give students with IEPs the opportunity to graduate and are also included in the federal government’s appraisal of Adequate Yearly Progress under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.<sup>3</sup>

### **SUMMARY**

**This report summarizes results of alternate assessments to the 10th-grade Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) for special populations in spring 2006.**

A student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) team determines which assessment he or she is eligible to take. The decision is based on the student’s developmental or instructional level.

- 4.4 percent of 10th graders were slated to take an alternate assessment in spring 2006:
  - ✓ WASL-Modified, 0.5 percent
  - ✓ WAAS-Portfolio, 0.6 percent
  - ✓ WAAS-DAW, 1.5 percent
  - ✓ Combination of alternatives, 1.8 percent
- 78.3 percent of the students who were scheduled to take a **WASL-Modified** completed the assessment; 17.2 percent of these students met standard in all three subjects (reading, writing, and math).
- 94.3 percent of the students who participated in the **WAAS-Portfolio** option completed the assessment; 62 percent of these students met standard in all three areas.
- 90.1 percent of the students who were eligible for a **developmentally appropriate WASL** (WAAS-DAW) completed the assessment; 10 percent of these students met standard overall.

<sup>1</sup> SSB 6618, Chapter 352, Laws of 2006

<sup>2</sup> ESHB 2195, Chapter 19, Laws of 2004

<sup>3</sup> Wade Cole and Robert Barnoski. (2006). *How Different Base Populations Affect WASL Results* Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Document No. 06-11-2201.

A student's IEP team determines whether he or she is able to participate in the WASL. The decision for a student to participate in the WASL-Modified or WAAS must be based on the unique needs of the individual student, not a specific disability.

The **WASL-Modified** is administered to students with IEPs who perform at or near grade level and who are able to take paper-and-pencil tests under routine conditions. The WASL-Modified is identical to the unmodified WASL but sets the achievement standard at Level 2 (Basic) rather than Level 3 (Proficient).

The **WAAS-Portfolio** is reserved for students with significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to take paper-and-pencil tests, even with accommodations. These students submit samples of their work for review.

The **Developmentally Appropriate WASL (WAAS-DAW)** is intended for students whose performance is substantially below grade level. Students take a WASL for the grade level that most closely matches their developmental or instructional level. The WAAS-DAW may only be used for content areas in which the student receives special education services.<sup>4</sup>

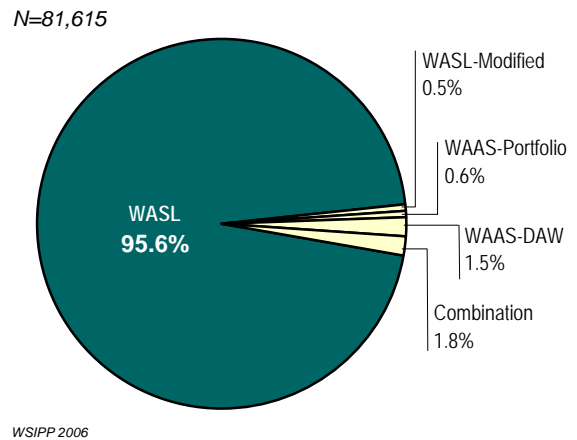
### STUDENTS SLATED TO TAKE EACH TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

**Exhibit 1** illustrates the distribution of students across different assessment types.

- Of the 81,615 10th graders enrolled in Washington's public schools in spring 2006, the overwhelming majority—nearly 96 percent—were scheduled to take the unmodified WASL.
- Only 0.5 percent of students (n=401) were eligible for the WASL-Modified.
- Less than 1 percent of students (n=455) were slated for the WAAS-Portfolio option.
- An additional 1.5 percent of 10th graders (n=1,248) were eligible for the WAAS-DAW.
- Approximately 2 percent (n=1,491) were slated for some combination of alternate assessments.

<sup>4</sup> In most cases, English language learner (ELL) students who receive second language support services are expected to participate in the unmodified WASL. T. Bergeson, C. Davidson, and J. Willhoft. (2006). *Guidelines for Participation and Testing Accommodations for Special Populations in State Assessment Programs*. Olympia: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

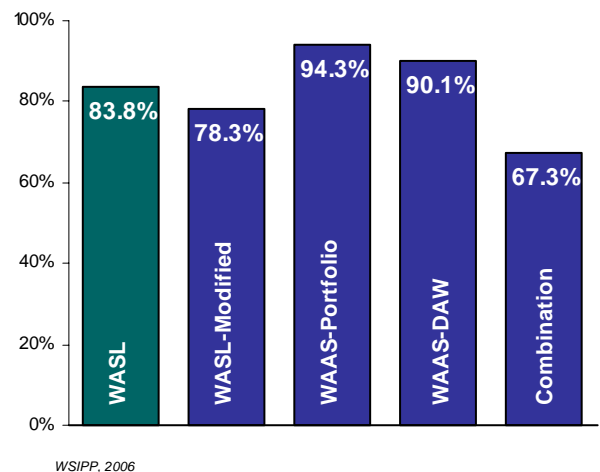
**Exhibit 1**  
Percentage of 10th Graders by Type of Assessment, Spring 2006



### COMPLETION RATES BY ASSESSMENT TYPE

**Exhibit 2** shows that not every 10th grader completed an assessment as scheduled in spring 2006. Depending on which assessment students were slated to take, 67.3 to 94.3 percent completed all three reading, writing, and math subject-area assessments. The Appendix describes the reasons students did not complete an alternate assessment, and also reports the number and percentage of students who completed each type of alternate assessment by subject area.

**Exhibit 2**  
Percentage of 10th Graders Completing an Assessment, Spring 2006



Note: "Combination" refers to a combination of alternate assessments (WAAS-Portfolio, WAAS-DAW, and WASL-Modified).

## MET-STANDARD RATES BY ASSESSMENT TYPE

**Exhibit 3** displays the percentage of 10th graders who met standard in all three subject areas on each type of assessment in spring 2006. Sixty-two percent who completed the WAAS-Portfolio met standard, while the rates for other alternate assessments were much lower. In comparison, 53.6 percent of 10th graders who completed the unmodified WASL met standard in reading, writing, and math.

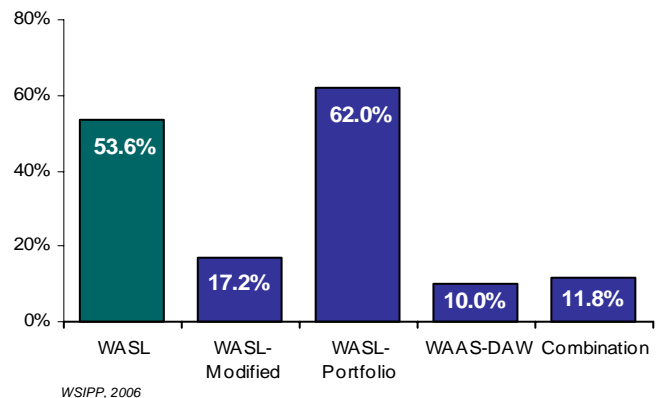
Overall, 83.6 percent of 10th-grade students completed either the unmodified WASL or an alternate assessment in 2006 and slightly more than half—52.2 percent—met standard in all three subject areas.

**Exhibit 4** provides a more detailed portrait of student performance on alternate assessments by charting the percentage of students who met standard by content area.

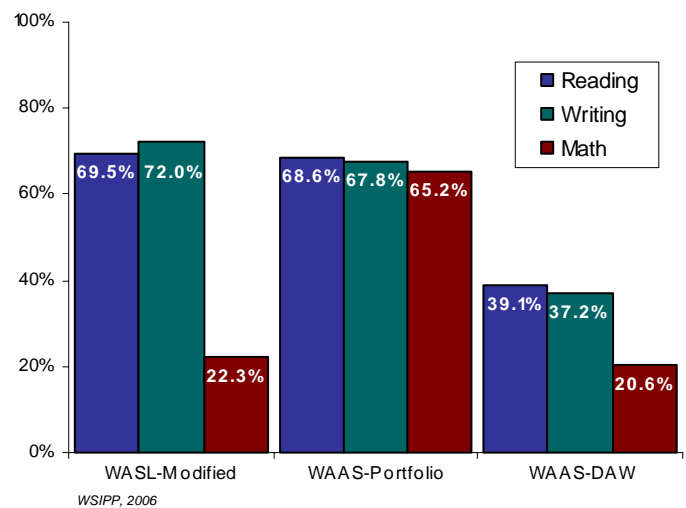
- For the WASL-Modified, students were more than three times as likely to meet standard in reading and writing as in math.
- Students who completed the WAAS-Portfolio met standard in reading and writing at rates comparable to the WASL-Modified; however, a much larger percentage met standard in math.
- Student performance was lowest for the WAAS-DAW—less than half of students met standard in reading and writing and one-fifth met standard in math.

Given the diverse nature of these alternate assessments and the fact that they are administered to different categories of students, the variation depicted in Exhibit 4 is to be expected.

**Exhibit 3**  
Percentage of 10th Graders Meeting Standard In Three Subject Areas by Type of Assessment, Spring 2006



**Exhibit 4**  
Percentage of 10th Graders Meeting Standard in Reading, Writing, and Math by Type of Assessment, Spring 2006



## Appendix

**Participation in the 10th-Grade  
Alternate Assessments, Spring 2006**

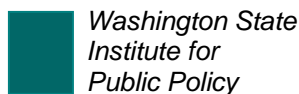
| Subject               | Number Scheduled | Number Completed | Percent Completed |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>WASL-Modified</b>  |                  |                  |                   |
| Reading               | 664              | 593              | 89.3%             |
| Writing               | 730              | 647              | 88.6%             |
| Math                  | 656              | 582              | 88.7%             |
| <b>All three</b>      | <b>401</b>       | <b>314</b>       | <b>78.3%</b>      |
| <b>WAAS-Portfolio</b> |                  |                  |                   |
| Reading               | 467              | 443              | 94.9%             |
| Writing               | 485              | 454              | 94.2%             |
| Math                  | 465              | 441              | 94.8%             |
| <b>All three</b>      | <b>455</b>       | <b>429</b>       | <b>94.3%</b>      |
| <b>WAAS-DAW</b>       |                  |                  |                   |
| Reading               | 1,697            | 1,564            | 92.2%             |
| Writing               | 1,756            | 1,603            | 91.3%             |
| Math                  | 1,894            | 1,781            | 94.0%             |
| <b>All three</b>      | <b>1,248</b>     | <b>1,125</b>     | <b>90.1%</b>      |

**Reasons for Incomplete Alternate  
Assessments, Spring 2006**

| <b>WASL-Modified</b>        |                    |                    |                 |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Reason Not Completed        | Reading<br>(n=71)  | Writing<br>(n=83)  | Math<br>(n=74)  |
| Absent excused              | 40.8%              | 41.0%              | 32.4%           |
| Absent unexcused not tested | 26.8%              | 10.8%              | 35.1%           |
| Incomplete not tested       | 19.7%              | 31.3%              | 21.6%           |
| Partially enrolled          | 7.0%               | 10.8%              | 8.1%            |
| Refused not tested          | 5.6%               | 3.6%               | 2.7%            |
| No booklet not tested       | —                  | 2.4%               | —               |
| <b>WAAS-Portfolio</b>       |                    |                    |                 |
| Reason Not Completed        | Reading<br>(n=24)  | Writing<br>(n=28)  | Math<br>(n=24)  |
| Refused not tested          | 100.0%             | 100.0%             | 100.0%          |
| <b>WAAS-DAW</b>             |                    |                    |                 |
| Reason Not Completed        | Reading<br>(n=133) | Writing<br>(n=153) | Math<br>(n=113) |
| Incomplete not tested       | 33.8%              | 39.2%              | 38.9%           |
| Absent excused              | 31.6%              | 33.3%              | 31.9%           |
| Absent unexcused not tested | 11.3%              | 9.2%               | 16.8%           |
| Refused not tested          | 15.8%              | 9.2%               | 4.4%            |
| Partially enrolled          | 6.8%               | 9.2%               | 8.0%            |
| Medical exemption           | 0.8%               | —                  | —               |

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