Offi  ce of Superintendent
of Public Instruction

A Guide to the
New Graduation
Requirements

Preparing Students for Life and Work

Office of Superintendent
of Public Instruction

State Board of Education

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Preparing Students for Life and Work: A Guide to the New Graduation Requirements

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Preparing Students for Life and Work: A Guide to the New Graduation Requirements

Why did we create new high school graduation requirements for the class of 2008 and beyond?

It's pretty simple: The world is a much tougher and more competitive place than it used to be, and our children have to be much better prepared than we were when we left high school.

Here’s what’s changed:

Students must have a fundamental set of skills when they leave high school. The vast majority of jobs now require some kind of training or education after high school. And too many of our students are still struggling with just the basics.

Business leaders report they can’t find qualified employees who can read operating manuals, write coherent memos and compute sales prices.

There’s much more need for people who have strong math, science and communication skills in our fast-moving, high-tech, global economy.

To succeed in life, whether it’s buying a home, choosing a doctor, or applying for and keeping a job, people must be able to think critically and solve problems creatively. Students need to learn these skills in school by applying what they learn in real-world situations. Memorizing facts and formulas to repeat on a test isn't good enough preparation anymore.

It seems obvious that our schools should be preparing all students to read, write and do math at a level that will allow them to succeed both personally and professionally. But for decades, we haven’t reached all students – only some of them.

We can no longer afford to let some students “fall through the cracks” of our education system, and leave high school without the skills they need to succeed in life.
What will happen if our children leave high school without fundamental skills?

They will struggle to survive, both personally and professionally, and have difficulty making informed decisions about everything from managing their money to electing local, state and national leaders.

Prior to 2008, the state of Washington has only required that students earn 19 credits to graduate (although many local school districts have additional requirements). But discussion of new graduation requirements began more than a decade ago, when legislators passed House Bill 1209 in 1993. HB 1209 launched Washington’s education reform efforts and created a process by which the Washington Assessment of Student Learning would become a graduation requirement. In 2000, the State Board of Education determined the effective date of that requirement – 2008 – and added two other requirements. The 2004 Legislature put all three new graduation requirements and their 2008 effective date into statute.

Beginning with the class of 2008, students will need to meet four state graduation requirements:

1. Earn 19 credits in core courses
2. Complete a culminating project (often referred to as a senior project) to apply learning in a particular area of the student’s interests
3. Complete a “high school and beyond” plan that outlines steps needed to earn a diploma and prepare for the first year after high school
4. Earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement by passing the reading, writing and math portions of the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL); science also will be required beginning in 2010

The three new graduation requirements are focused on the new “applied learning” skills that students need to be successful. The project allows students to dive into a subject that interests them and demonstrate their skills in a creative way. The plan requires students to begin thinking about their career and life options before they leave high school. And the WASL places a strong emphasis on short-answer and essay questions that require students to demonstrate they can understand what they read, write a persuasive essay, and understand how to get the answers to real-life math problems, such as calculating the mileage on a long trip and interpreting simple charts and graphs.

Most students must do far more than fulfill these four basic graduation requirements to achieve their career goals. But those requirements are a solid start to ensure all of our students keep their career and life options open.

The following is a list of questions and answers that will help you understand the new requirements. Questions in black have been added since the first edition of this guide was created in November 2005.

Have more questions you’d like answered? Please e-mail them to OSPI Assistant Superintendent Scott Poirier at spoirier@ospi.wednet.edu.

If you have questions about federal accountability and “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) requirements, please refer to the OSPI Web site at http://www.k12.wa.us/ESEA/AdequateYearlyProgress.aspx.
A. General graduation requirement questions

1. What are the new graduation requirements, and when do they take effect?
   The state of Washington requires that public school students who graduate from high school in 2008 and beyond must, in addition to compiling a minimum of 19 credits, complete a culminating project (often referred to as a senior project), create a plan that outlines how they will use high school to earn their diploma and prepare for their career objectives; and earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement, or a Certificate of Individual Achievement for some students in special education programs.

2. Do students enrolled in private schools or who are home-schooled have to meet the new graduation requirements?
   No.

3. What is the Certificate of Academic Achievement?
   To obtain a certificate, students must pass the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning in reading, writing and math. Students who graduate in 2010 and beyond also must pass the science WASL.

4. Do all students have to earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement? What about options for special education students?
   All students must earn either the Certificate of Academic Achievement or the Certificate of Individual Achievement as part of their graduation requirements.

   State law provides the Certificate of Individual Achievement for some students enrolled in special education programs. The Certificate of Individual Achievement is for students whose individualized education program (IEP) teams determine that passing one or more portions of the high school WASL isn’t an appropriate measure of the students’ abilities. Students may earn a Certificate of Individual Achievement by passing the Washington Alternative Assessment System portfolio, a developmentally appropriate WASL (e.g., a 10th-grade student taking an 8th-grade math WASL), one or more high school WASL tests, and/or through multiple measures as determined by students’ IEP teams under guidance developed by OSPI. Again, the determination of whether a student is eligible for the Certificate of Individual Achievement, and the route the student must take to earn it, is completely up to the individual IEP team. For more information about how to implement the Certificate of Individual Achievement option for students enrolled in special education programs, see the OSPI publication, “Guidelines for Participation and Testing Accommodations for Special Populations in State Assessment Programs” (October 2005), available at www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/Assessment.aspx.

5. Will special education students who earn a Certificate of Individual Achievement get a different diploma?
   No. Earning a Certificate of Individual Achievement will lead to a “regular” diploma. The difference in the certificate will be noted only on the student’s transcript.

6. How many other states require students to pass a test to graduate from high school?
   Twenty-six states have some kind of exit exam requirement that students must meet to graduate.

7. What are the courses required for graduation?
   Keep in mind that there is a difference between state and local requirements; many local school districts require more credits than the state minimum of 19.

(Continued)
For students whose “on time” year of graduation is 2008 and beyond, the minimum state course credit requirements are:

- 3 credits in English
- 2 credits in math
- 2 credits in science (including 1 credit in a lab science)
- 2.5 credits in social studies
- 2 credits in health and fitness
- 1 credit in the arts
- 1 credit in occupational education
- 5.5 credits in electives

For more information about state course credit requirements, visit the State Board of Education Web site at www.sbe.wa.gov.

8. Do students have to meet all state and local requirements, including passing the WASL, to graduate?

Yes. The graduation requirements are outlined in Question A1. However, everyone agrees that there must be opportunities for students who struggle with the WASL, but meet all other graduation requirements, to have their achievement acknowledged. In the Alternative Assessment section of this handbook, you can read more about alternative assessments being piloted for students who have taken the WASL at least twice and, for a variety of reasons, not passed one or more sections. These alternative options include a proposal to take both grades and a portfolio of student work into account when determining whether or not to grant a Certificate of Academic Achievement. The Washington Legislature must approve any alternative assessment options before they can be implemented. If that approval is given in the 2006 legislative session, alternative assessments will be available for use in the 2006-07 school year.

9. Who is eligible for a Certificate of Individual Achievement?

A student’s individualized education program (IEP) team has the authority to make decisions about whether any individual student enrolled in a special education program qualifies to earn a Certificate of Individual Achievement. OSPI has provided extensive guidelines to school district assessment coordinators, IEP teams and other staff that will help them make these individual decisions. For more details, see the OSPI publication, “Guidelines for Participation and Testing Accommodations for Special Populations in State Assessment Programs” (October 2005), available at www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/Assessment.aspx. Appendix A of that publication contains flowcharts to help administrators determine when CIA eligibility applies.

10. Can students with a Section 504 Plan access the Certificate of Individual Achievement?

No. The Certificate of Individual Achievement is designed for students being served in a special education program whose IEP team recommends an alternate assessment to the WASL, such as the WAAS portfolio or a developmentally appropriate WASL (DAW). Students with a Section 504 plan can access accommodations available on the WASL.

For students whose “on time” year of graduation is 2008 and beyond, the minimum state course credit requirements are:
11. What if a student enrolled in special education takes an alternate assessment to pass math? Will he get a Certificate of Academic Achievement, a Certificate of Individual Achievement, or both?

Students earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement only by passing the high school WASL in reading, writing and math (and, for the graduating class of 2010 and beyond, in science). Students enrolled in special education programs can take a combination of assessments – including the WASL and those designed for special education students – based on the guidelines in their individualized education programs, but passing any combination of these assessments will result in a Certificate of Individual Achievement, not a Certificate of Academic Achievement.

12. If a student enrolled in special education takes an assessment other than the 10th-grade WASL, can he take the “regular” WASL later to receive a Certificate of Academic Achievement instead of a Certificate of Individual Achievement?

Yes.

13. Is there a state-mandated cap on the percentage of students in a school/district who can qualify to earn the Certificate of Individual Achievement?

No. Decisions about whether individual students should pursue a Certificate of Individual Achievement are left to the discretion of individualized education program (IEP) teams in each school and district. There are federally mandated caps on how many students can use the WAAS portfolio and developmentally appropriate WASL to meet learning standards for federal accountability purposes, but those caps apply only to calculations of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) at the district and state level. There is no cap on the number of students who can pursue these options to earn a high school diploma.

14. Who is the “class of 2008”? This year’s 10th-graders or last year’s 9th-graders?

The new graduation requirements for the class of 2008 apply to students who first entered 9th grade in the 2004-05 school year. A district may have some students in this year’s 10th-grade class who are repeating 10th grade. Because those students did not first enter 9th grade in 2004-05 (they entered before then), they are not subject to the new graduation requirements.

15. Districts define who is a sophomore in different ways. What are the guidelines in terms of the WASL?

Districts set their own policy in how they define a 10th-grader. It can be by credit, age or number of years in high school. A district needs to administer the WASL to all students enrolled in the 10th grade at the time of testing. In other words, all students the district declares are 10th-graders on March 13 and 14 this spring (per the student data file that is submitted to OSPI no later than April 15) need to take the reading WASL. The same rule applies for enrollment on testing days for all other subjects. The only exception to this testing requirement is for students who have already passed the high school WASL. So, students who took and passed the reading WASL last year as sophomores would not have to take that WASL again this year, even if they are still classified as sophomores.

16. How can some students get good grades in classes and still not pass the WASL?

Grades show whether students meet individual classroom expectations, and are based on a variety of factors such as class work, tests, attendance, behavior, homework, skill level and effort. In contrast, the WASL measures how well students meet state learning standards. For more than a decade, Washington has had a standards-based K-12 system, focused on ensuring all students meet four learning goals:

1) Read with comprehension, write with skill, and communicate effectively
2) Know and apply core concepts and principles of mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, and health and fitness

3) Think analytically, logically and creatively, using experience and knowledge to make reasoned judgment and solve problems

4) Understand the importance of work and how performance, effort and decisions affect future career and educational opportunities

Because the WASL measures performance against state standards, some “C” students will do well on the WASL. Some “A” students will not. It depends on the kinds of skills they’ve been learning in the classroom, and their ability to apply what they’ve learned. Part of the reason the WASL was introduced as a graduation requirement was to ensure we had at least one objective measure of what students know and are able to do, based on statewide learning goals in all subjects.

17. What is being done to ensure that courses are addressing the standards assessed by the WASL?

Schools are accountable for student learning. They must help students progress through school, gaining the skills they need. The required evidence of the school’s performance is that the students in the school can meet state expectations and standards by passing the WASL, meet the other graduation requirements regarding coursework, projects and high school planning, and graduate on time. Since those “tests” of the school depend on students succeeding on the WASL, schools realize they must insure that classes are focused on the skills students need.

The WASL measures how well students are learning state standards known as essential academic learning requirements (also referred to as EALRs). These learning goals are broken down further into grade-level expectations. All of these learning goals were developed over the course of several years with the help of thousands of Washington educators. The EALRs have been in place for several years, and schools are expected to use them as the basis for all classroom instruction. The more detailed grade-level expectations in reading, writing/communications, math and science have been introduced gradually over the past three years. All of this information is readily available on the OSPI Web site at http://www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/EALR_GLE.aspx.

18. What happens if a student pursues an associate’s degree at a community college through the Running Start program and skips the WASL, culminating project, and high school and beyond plan?

The student will not be awarded a public high school diploma.

B. The WASL

1. How many questions do students need to get right on the WASL to pass?

Students generally have to get about 65 percent of the points possible on each test to meet standard, or “pass.”
2. Why are the dates changing for the spring 2006 high school WASL? What are the new dates?

Reading and writing tests will be given in March to have time to score the tests and return scores to students by early June. Math and science tests will follow in April, with math scores also to be returned in early June. (Science scores will be returned later in the summer.) Following is the mandatory 2006 high school testing schedule. The test is untimed, but students generally take between 90 minutes to two hours to complete each section of the test:

- Monday, March 13 – Reading, day one
- Tuesday, March 14 – Reading, day two
- Wednesday, March 15 – Writing, day one
- Thursday, March 16 – Writing, day two
- Tuesday, April 18 – Math, day one
- Wednesday, April 19 – Math, day two
- Thursday, April 20 – Science, day one
- Friday, April 21 – Science, day two

There are no exceptions to the mandatory schedule.

Additional information can be found at: http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/TestWindow.aspx

3. What if a student misses the test? When is the make-up?

There are no make-ups for the high school test. If students miss a test (one or both sessions of the reading test, for example), then they may take the test at the next regularly scheduled test administration in August 2006. If a student takes only one session of a test, the test will be scored as incomplete.

Elementary and middle school students may continue to take make-up tests during the regular spring WASL testing window.

4. Why can’t high school students make up the test later in the spring test window like they have before?

Because the high school test now is required for graduation purposes, security is critical to ensure the reliability and validity of the results for each student. All students must take each test at the same time on the same day (similar to the procedure used for the SAT and related exams).

5. Can 9th-graders take the test?

Yes, school districts must provide students who are enrolled in 9th grade the opportunity to take the test. However, this opportunity is designed for students who have the knowledge and skills to pass the test and wish to get all or part of the WASL graduation requirement “out of the way” in their 9th-grade year. OSPI provided guidance for this decision to be made in a bulletin to school and district staff in December; the bulletin can be accessed online at http://www.k12.wa.us/BulletinsMemos/bulletins2005/B122-05.doc. OSPI has provided information to school district assessment coordinators explaining how 9th-grade students who choose to take the WASL can register. Ninth-grade students can register online for the spring 2006 test through January 20 at https://www.k12.wa.us/WASLRegistration/.

6. If 9th-graders take the test, is this considered a “practice” attempt?

No. Taking the test in 9th grade will be counted as one of a student’s five state-paid opportunities to pass the test.

7. Can a school or district require 9th-graders to take the WASL?

No. The decision to take the WASL in grade 9 is an individual student decision. The school or school district cannot mandate that 9th-graders take all or part of the test.
8. How can a student receive a “scholar” designation based on WASL performance?

Students can receive scholar’s designations on their transcripts for each subject when they achieve a level 4 score (“exceeds standard”) on the WASL the first time they take the test. If students take the WASL for the first time in either grade 9 or 10 and do not achieve level 4, they have lost their opportunity to receive the scholar’s designation on their transcripts.

9. When will 10th-graders receive their test results?

School districts will receive preliminary results from this spring’s reading, writing and math tests by June 8. Districts will be asked to distribute those results to individual students by June 14. Results from the science test, and verified results for the reading, writing and math tests, will be returned in September.

10. What WASL information goes on the transcript?

The highest WASL scores and levels achieved in each subject are posted on students’ transcripts. This began with the transcripts of students in the Class of 2006. There is no indication on the transcript of how many times a student took the WASL – just the highest score and level achieved and the date.

For the Class of 2008 and beyond, the transcript will indicate whether a student has earned a Certificate of Academic Achievement by passing the reading, math and writing portions of the WASL, or a Certificate of Individual Achievement by passing the Washington Alternate Assessment System (WAAS) or some combination of the WAAS and WASL in those three subjects (the latter is designed for access by some students enrolled in special education who meet specific qualifications).

11. If students take the first day of the reading (or any other) test in the spring but, for some reason, don’t complete the second day of the test, does it count as one of their five official tries?

No. Only completed tests that generate a score count as an official “attempt” for purposes of the five state-paid tries students to pass the high school WASL. Students who complete only one day of the two-day test do not have those tests scored.

12. What will happen to students who choose not to take the high school WASL?

They will not be eligible to earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement. The certificate is required to graduate from high school, beginning with the class of 2008.

C. Retaking the WASL

1. How many times may students retake the WASL?

Students who do not meet one or more of the standards on the WASL may retake the assessment up to four times at no cost. In addition, students may retake the assessment four additional times if they are enrolled in a high school completion program at a community or technical college. That means anyone who leaves high school and enrolls in a high school completion program could have a total of nine tries to take each portion of the WASL required to earn a diploma.

2. Can 11th- and 12th-graders who don’t need to pass the test to graduate still retake it?

In spring 2006, 11th- and 12th-grade students who have not met standard or wish to improve their previous score may retake the test.
Possible paths leading to a certificate

The Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) and the Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA) can both lead to a high school diploma. Only students in special education programs can access the CIA if the Individual Education Program (IEP) team determines it is more appropriate than the CAA. Below are flow charts illustrating the paths a student may take to earn a CAA or CIA.

**Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA)**

- **WASL**
  - (with or without accommodations)
  - Met standard
  - Not met standard

- **Retakes**
  - (can take as many as four)
  - Met standard
  - Not met standard

- **Alternative Methods**
  - Met standard
  - Not met standard

- **Appeals**
  - Met standard
  - Not met standard

- **Yes CAA**
- **No CAA**

**Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA)**

- **WAAS DAW**
  - (with or without accommodations)

- **WAAS Portfolio**
  - (with or without accommodations)

- **Other appropriate measures**
  - (as determined by IEP)

- **Retakes**
  - Met standard
  - Not met standard

- **Appeals**
  - Met standard
  - Not met standard

- **Yes CIA**
- **No CIA**

**Notes:**
1. The path taken by a Special Education student will be determined in the student’s IEP.
2. Students will be able to access remedial help at any point in the process.
3. Students need to take at least one retake before accessing Alternative Methods. Accessing Alternative Methods does not preclude retaking the WASL.

**Key:**

- **DAW:** Developmentally Appropriate WASL
- **IEP:** Individualized Education Program
- **WASL:** Washington Assessment of Student Learning
- **WAAS:** Washington Alternate Assessment System

OSPI | January 17, 2006
3. May students who have met the standards retake the WASL to increase their scores?
Yes.

4. When will retakes be available?
Beginning in 2006, the high school WASL will be given two times a year – once in the spring, and once in August. Students will receive their spring reading, writing and math scores in early to mid-June so that they can access summer school, tutoring or other services over the summer to help them improve their skills and be better prepared for their first retake opportunity in August, should they choose to take advantage of it.

5. If student meet the standard in a content area (e.g., reading), but not in other content areas, do they have to retake all three assessments?
No. Students will only need to retake the portions of the WASL they didn't pass.

6. If a re-test score is lower, what goes on transcript?
Only the highest scale score and level achieved in each subject is recorded on the transcript.

7. If students don’t pass the math WASL, for example, do they have to retake the entire math test, or can they retake just part of it?
Students must retake an entire test, not just a portion of a test.

D. August 2006 WASL retakes

1. When will the summer 2006 assessments be administered?
The assessments will be administered from August 7-10, 2006 according to the following schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Content Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 7</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 8</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 9</td>
<td>Writing (Expository)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 10</td>
<td>Writing (Persuasive)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Which students are eligible to retake the assessments during the summer administration?
Students in Grades 10 and 11 in 2005-2006 (classes of 2007 and 2008) are eligible to take the assessments. This includes students who met or did not meet standard in the spring of 2006, did not participate in testing or who have transferred from out-of-state. Students may take one, two or all three of the assessments.

3. Which students should retake the assessment in the summer?
While this decision should be made on a case-by-case basis, the probability of meeting the standard on the retake will be much higher for students who participated in a summer school program or received other types of assistance after taking the WASL in the spring. Also, students who did not pass in multiple subject areas may want to focus on taking the WASL in just one or two subjects (e.g., writing).
4. Where will the summer 2006 assessments be administered?

The August tests will be offered at a variety of locations around the state. School districts will be asked this winter and spring to identify a testing site in their district or in a neighboring district. These locations are likely to include high schools, community college campuses and educational service district offices. Students may take the assessments at any of the testing sites, but will be encouraged to take the assessments at their school district’s designated site.

5. How will students register to retake the assessments?

Students will be able to register online or via a toll-free telephone number from mid-June through early July.

6. Can students retake the science test in summer 2006?

No. Students who wish to retake the 2006 science WASL will have an opportunity to retake the test in the spring of 2007. Beginning in 2008, the high school science WASL will be given two times a year – once in the spring, and once in mid-August. The science test does not become required for graduation purposes until 2010.

7. Will school districts be reimbursed for the cost of administering the summer assessments?

Yes. The Legislature appropriated funding to pay school districts for the costs of administering the assessments. These funds are intended to pay for central office, proctoring, janitorial and indirect administration costs. OSPI is currently developing an allocation formula for distributing these funds to school districts.

8. Will accommodations be available for special education and English language learner (ELL) students?

Yes. Districts will be required to provide accommodations for special education and ELL students. Specifics on available accommodations are outlined in the Assessment Coordinator’s Manual: [www.k12.wa.us/Assessment/TestAdministration/Coordinator.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/Assessment/TestAdministration/Coordinator.aspx) and “Guidelines for Participation and Testing Accommodations for Special Populations in State Assessment Programs,” available at [www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/Assessment.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/Assessment.aspx).

9. Will “Developmentally Appropriate WASLs” for other grades be available for special education students?

OSPI is exploring how to make DAW retakes available.

10. When will students get results from the August tests?

In mid-October.

E. Alternative assessments and appeals

Note: All proposed alternative assessments and appeals processes for purposes of obtaining a Certificate of Academic Achievement must be approved by the Washington Legislature before they can be implemented.

1. Will alternative assessments be available?

In House Bill 2195 (passed during the 2004 legislative session), the Legislature directed OSPI to develop “one or more alternative assessments” for students to demonstrate they have the required skills in reading, math and writing. These alternative assessments are to be “comparable” in rigor to the WASL and measure the same skills and knowledge assessed on the WASL.
OSPI was directed to develop options for these alternative assessments and make recommendations to the Legislature for its approval. Two alternative assessment methods will be recommended during the 2006 legislative session:

- **WASL/grades:** The first method compares the student’s grades in mathematics or language arts courses with the grades of other students who passed the WASL and who took the same mathematics or language arts courses. If the student’s grades are above the average grades of this “cohort” of other students, the student would meet the standard.

- **Collection of evidence:** The second method involves compiling specific student work as evidence that the student has met the learning standards. The student work could include components of a student’s culminating project, writing assignments, problems involving mathematics content and processes, and other academic and career or technical classroom work that demonstrates the knowledge and skills tested on the WASL. The collection of evidence would be required to meet specified criteria, and would be evaluated by state-level review teams consisting of teachers and other educators.

As noted above, the Legislature must approve the alternative methods of assessment before they are implemented. This will likely occur in mid-March 2006.

2. **For whom are the alternative assessments intended?**
   The purpose of the assessments is to provide students an additional means of demonstrating that they have essential skills and knowledge. They are intended for students who have the required skills and knowledge, but have not been able to demonstrate them on the WASL. The alternative assessments have the potential to be useful for students in career and technical programs, and for advanced English language learners who have difficulty demonstrating their skills and knowledge on the WASL. The alternatives are not being designed for students who do not have the required skills and knowledge.

3. **Who is eligible to use an alternative assessment?**
   Under current law, students are required to take the WASL at least twice before accessing an alternative assessment.

4. **When will the alternative assessments be available?**
   OSPI will ask the Legislature to authorize the alternative assessments in the 2006 legislative session. If they are authorized, the alternative assessments will be available beginning in the 2006-07 school year.

5. **Will students be able to appeal the score they received on the WASL if they think it was improperly scored?**
   Yes, a score appeal process will be available for the high school assessment beginning in June 2006.
F. Transfer students

1. If students transfer in from out of state as juniors or seniors, will they have to pass the WASL to graduate? What if they have already passed an exit exam in their former high school?

Recommended guidelines and an appeal process are currently being developed for students who transfer to Washington public schools in their junior or senior year. Final decisions will be made by OSPI prior to the 2006-07 school year based on decisions made by the Legislature during the 2006 session. The guidelines and appeal process will likely consider whether students have passed a high school assessment in their former state or country, and any other evidence that they have sufficient reading, writing and mathematics skills and knowledge to earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement.

2. Will private school and home-schooled students who transfer to a public high school and want to receive a public high school diploma be required to meet the standards on the WASL to graduate?

If, at any point, private school or home-schooled students transfer to a public school and wish to earn a public high school diploma, they will need to pass the WASL as well as meet other public high school graduation requirements. Private school and home-schooled students who think they might transfer to a public high school in order to get a public high school diploma should be encouraged to take the high school WASL in the 10th grade at their private school or at a local public school. Final decisions on how these situations will be handled will be made prior to the 2006-07 school year, based on decisions made by the Legislature during the 2006 session.

G. Remediation

1. What about those students who can’t pass the WASL or an alternative assessment? What’s being done to help them graduate?

Districts are using a variety of approaches to help students who are behind in learning key skills in meeting state standards, from providing more intensive instruction in reading and math, to offering after-school academies and other forms of one-on-one tutoring. Districts have $12 million in new state funding for high school remediation for the 2005-06 and 2006-07 school years. The money is being distributed through the Learning Assistance Program, with poverty as the major driver. Some high schools are receiving quite a bit of new money, while others are getting very little or none. OSPI has requested an additional $42 million for the coming year so that, combined with the original $12 million, schools can provide a summer school program or extended learning time for each student in the class of 2008 who has not met standard in one or more content areas. Many districts also are using some of their additional I-728 (student achievement fund) money for remediation for high school students.

2. Math is the area where students have the most difficulty. What’s being done to help improve student achievement in math?

OSPI is developing assessments that teachers can easily use to diagnose students’ specific math problems, identifying specific math skills that many high school students appear to lack, and developing curriculum, instructional strategies, sample lessons and other tools that can be used in learning opportunities offered after school or over the summer to boost achievement in specific math skill areas. These projects will be discussed in-depth at the 2006 OSPI January Conference, and the products of that work will be ready for use by next summer. OSPI is requesting an extra $4.7 million in the coming year to expand this Math Now! initiative.
3. How can districts plan for summer school enrollment when WASL scores won’t come back until June?

There is no way to predict how many students will need – or take advantage of – summer school opportunities. Past statewide history of high school WASL performance, however, indicates the need probably will be strongest in math. Many districts are taking a look at past WASL performance trends in their high schools to estimate the number of sophomores who won’t meet standards in reading, writing and math this spring, in order to plan for summer school needs.

4. Are most high schools planning to have a remedial class for those students who do not pass the WASL the first time around? Do you know what the class will look like as far as teacher and curriculum?

School districts are designing options based on their individual student populations. In some instances, providing and/or requiring specific course work is a good option, while in other situations, targeted assistance will be a more effective option.

5. How will summer school be funded for those 10th graders who do not meet standard on the WASL? Will there be a standard curriculum for all schools to follow?

School districts may use both state and federal dollars to fund summer school programs. For instance, districts may use federal Title I or Learning Assistance Program money (districts get varying amounts of these funds based on levels of student poverty and other factors), and state student achievement fund money (also known as I-728 money) distributed on a per-student basis each year. OSPI is developing instructional support modules in reading, writing and mathematics that are being shared with districts this winter and spring and can be used to offer targeted help to students who haven’t yet met state learning standards.

6. Will options be available for WASL remediation/support that do not require pulling students out of their elective options? Or will increases in basic math and English courses force schools to drop courses in electives?

Remediation can occur at a variety of times and in a variety of settings. For examples, schools can offer before-school, after-school, Saturday and summer school programs, so participating in remediation won’t necessarily require students to drop one or more elective courses. And for some students who aren’t registered for a full schedule, remediation could take place during the regular school day without reducing their elective studies. Courses in the arts, physical education and other “core” subjects are still required for graduation. There are excellent examples of how schools are effectively incorporating the state standards in reading, writing and math that students must meet to graduate into the learning that occurs in arts, physical education and other core classes.

7. What kind of assistance is being provided to students who do not pass one or more sections of the WASL?

OSPI’s Web site contains a great deal of information about effective strategies to teach the state’s learning standards. To check out OSPI’s online grade level resources, visit http://www.k12.wa.us/ealrs/default.aspx. This Web site offers a variety of instructional support aligned specifically to the grade level expectations for reading, mathematics, science, and writing and communications.
Also, as mentioned above in #5, OSPI is developing several instructional support modules in reading, writing and mathematics that can be used during summer school or at other times to give students focused assistance in particular skills. For example, the writing instruction modules include model lessons on introductions and conclusions, how to elaborate, persuasive writing, narrative writing and informational writing, as well as a sample four-week comprehensive course to help students gain skills in writing. The first modules will be introduced at OSPI’s 2006 January Conference, with trainings in the various modules to occur around the state throughout the spring and summer.

8. Can districts require students to complete remediation work, such as a WASL prep course or summer school, before retaking the WASL?

There is no state mandate requiring students to participate in remediation prior to retaking the WASL. Though encouraged by OSPI, whether or not to require such remediation is up to each local school district.

H. Culminating project

1. What is the culminating project?

The culminating project is a new graduation requirement passed by the State Board of Education in 2000. It is outlined in Washington Administrative Code WAC 180-51-061. See http://search.leg.wa.gov/wslwac/WAC 180 TITLE/WAC 180 - 51 CHAPTER/WAC 180 - 51 -061.htm for the specific language.

The new requirement states that each student graduating in 2008 and beyond shall complete a culminating project for graduation. The project consists of the student demonstrating how well they have met two of the state’s four learning goals (see summary of all four goals in Question A16):

- Think analytically, logically and creatively, and integrate experience and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and solve problems (Goal 3)
- Understand the importance of work and how performance, effort and decisions directly affect future career and educational opportunities (Goal 4)

Each district adopts its own written policy on how this graduation requirement will be implemented. The written policy includes assessment criteria.

2. When will the state-required culminating project graduation requirement take effect?

Students who began the ninth grade in the 2004-05 school year – the graduating class of 2008 – are the first students required by the state to create a culminating project.

3. What do culminating projects have to look like?

Culminating projects can take many forms. Each local school district and school board has the authority to determine the culminating project requirements for that district. Some schools require specific senior projects, while others ask students to create culmination portfolios. Some schools require that an internship or community service element be included in the projects. Some require all of the above and more. Each school district’s policy should outline details of the components it requires for the culminating project, and be readily available at each district high school.
4. Can a special education student receive accommodations on the culminating project requirement? How would that affect the type of diploma that would be issued?

Students being served in special education programs can receive accommodations on the culminating project based on the individualized education program (IEP) developed for each student. The accommodations should be documented in the IEP just like any other accommodation provided for the student. Students successfully completing the culminating project based on IEP accommodations will receive a “regular” diploma, provided all other graduation requirements are met.

5. Does the culminating project count toward the state minimum number of 19 credits required for graduation?

No. At the state level, the culminating project is a non-credit-bearing graduation requirement. However, a school district has the discretion to attach credit to the culminating project to help students meet higher credit requirements that may exist in that district.

6. Under the district policy that is required to implement the culminating project graduation requirement, does the project have to be implemented in the same way at every high school in the district?

It is up to the district to determine how the culminating project requirement will be implemented locally.

7. Can the district policy allow two or more students to do a joint culminating project?

Yes. It is a local school district decision.

8. Does the culminating project have to be done in the student’s senior year?

Districts set their own parameters for when projects may be undertaken.

9. If a student transfers from one high school to another, either within the same school district or between school districts, may the student continue with his/her current culminating project?

This is up to local school districts. It would make sense that a school district have a policy in place that allows students to move between schools in the same district without disrupting progress on the culminating project. Districts should also consider having a policy that reviews student progress on the culminating project when students are transferring in from outside the district as well. However, it is up to district boards and administrators to determine how the culminating project requirement will be implemented locally, including taking into consideration these kinds of situations.

10. Does a culminating project have to include community involvement, volunteer time or a service requirement?

It is up to the district to determine how the culminating project requirement will be implemented locally.

11. If a parent objects to some aspect of the culminating project on grounds of safety, inappropriateness, etc., what is the process for responding to the objection?

The district’s written policy for implementing the culminating project graduation requirement should address this possibility.

12. Where can a district go to get information about how to implement this graduation requirement?

The State Board of Education Web site (www.sbe.wa.gov) includes names of districts with contact information and offers guidelines that districts may find useful in creating and implementing their culminating project requirements.
I. High school and beyond plan

1. What is the high school and beyond plan?

In 2000, the State Board of Education adopted a rule adding an additional graduation requirement that students, starting with the class of 2008, create a “high school and beyond” plan. The rule specifies that “each student shall have an education plan for their high school experience, including what they expect to do the year following graduation.”

Students should outline how they plan to meet their high school graduation requirements and how they will spend their first year out of high school. Creating a plan helps students start thinking about their futures and focus on the courses they need to best prepare them for their career interests, no matter what direction they plan to take.

The following link will take you to the State Board of Education Web site that includes information about the plan: www.sbe.wa.gov/graduation/highschoolandbeyond.htm. The requirements for the plan are outlined in the Washington Administrative Code, but schools and districts have tremendous flexibility in how to implement the high school and beyond plan at the local level.