The 10th-grade WASL: What’s in it for you?

This is what’s in it for you: skills, a diploma and a good start.

Every spring all Washington state 10th-graders take the Washington Assessment of Student Learning—also known as “The WASL.” Beginning with the class of 2008, students will have to pass the 10th-grade WASL in reading, writing and math in order to graduate from high school. By 2010, science will be required.

But starting with the class of 2006, 10th-grade WASL scores will go on your official high school transcript. Many employers ask for WASL scores as part of the hiring process. Washington public colleges and universities are starting to make 10th-grade WASL scores part of their entrance and scholarship requirements, so doing well on the WASL helps get you a diploma, into college and a job.

What is the 10th-grade WASL?
It’s a statewide assessment given every spring in reading, writing, math and science. The WASL measures how well all students are learning the state’s academic standards—called the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs). The EALRs reflect what Washington educators, parents, business people and community leaders all say students must know and be able to do in order to be successful in the real world.

What’s on the test?
The WASL is a combination of multiple-choice, short-answer and essay questions. You don’t need to know trigonometry or calculus for this test. The WASL tests the essential information—reading, writing, algebra and science concepts—all students should know by the spring of 10th grade.

How is the WASL different than other standardized tests?
The WASL’s multiple-choice questions require you to think, not guess. Many WASL questions also ask you to choose the right answer and explain how you got that answer. Unlike other standardized tests, which measure students against other students, your WASL scores tell how well you—and only you—are learning the state standards.

Why should I take the WASL seriously?
Because it shows whether you have the basic skills you need. Once you show that you have those skills, your schedule options open up, allowing you to take higher-level classes and electives.

I don’t plan to go to college—so why does the WASL matter?
All students need to do well in high school. The WASL helps make sure every student, regardless of who you are, where you live or what you want to be, can read, write and do math.

What are the incentives for me to do well?
Starting with the class of 2006, WASL level and scale scores will be noted on your transcript, which is often looked at by colleges and employers. Soon, Washington’s public four-year colleges and universities may use the WASL as a factor in college admissions, as well as scholarships. Your high school also may offer incentives for those who pass, such as English or math credits, off-campus lunch privileges or a party.

How is the WASL scored?
You get two scores: scale and level. The scale score is a raw number (e.g. 410). That score then places you into one of four levels: Advanced (Level 4), Proficient (Level 3), Basic (Level 2) and Below Basic (Level 1). The goal is to get to level 3 or 4—which means you “met standard”—on each section of the WASL.
What happens if I don’t “meet standard”?  
If you tried your best on the test and didn’t meet standard, it means that you’re missing some key skills and information. You’ll likely need these skills for classes you’ll take during your last two years of high school and for whatever you choose to do after graduation. Make sure you talk with your teacher(s) about getting academic help.

Starting with the class of 2008, students must meet standard on all subjects of the 10th-grade WASL by the end of high school. To help students meet this requirement, schools will create student learning plans for any student who does not pass the WASL on the first try. You may even have a student learning plan now if you didn’t pass the 7th-grade WASL. Students also will have four total opportunities during their junior and senior years to retake any sections of the WASL they did not pass. An alternative to the WASL will be offered for students who, after repeated tries, are still unable to demonstrate their skills on the WASL.

How much time do I have to take the test?  
The WASL is not timed, so make sure you get as much time as you need. Students typically spend a couple of hours each day over the course of a week completing all sections of the WASL.

Do other states have tests like the WASL?  
Yes. Twenty-five states, including Washington, have or are planning to add a graduation requirement tied to a test like the WASL.

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**Actual 2004 10th-grade WASL Test Question**

Below is an actual test question from the 2004 10th-grade WASL.

To see more released test questions, visit [www.partnership4learning.org/edreform_wasl_sample.htm](http://www.partnership4learning.org/edreform_wasl_sample.htm).

**QUESTION:**

Earl is planning to travel from Seattle to Oklahoma City. His destination is 1,970 miles one-way. If he flies, he can get a one-way ticket for $400. If he drives, it will take him 3 days to get there, and the cost of renting a car would be $29 a day plus $0.19 per mile.

Considering his transportation costs alone, would it cost more if he flew or drove? Explain in detail your answer using words, numbers, and/or diagrams.

**STUDENT RESPONSE:**

\[ ($29/\text{day})(3 \text{ days}) = $87 \text{ for car rental} \]

\[ ($0.19/\text{mi})(1970 \text{ mi}) = $374.30 \text{ for mileage} \]

\[ $87 + $347.30 = $461.30 \text{ cost to drive} \]

Driving is more expensive

**RESPONSE ANALYSIS:**

The response shows understanding of how to do multiple step computations in a real-world context by doing the following: explaining or showing how to correctly calculate the cost for driving and indicating that driving would be more expensive or that flying would be less expensive.

The response earns full credit: two points out of a possible two points.

A student would get one point for doing one of the following:

1) Showing the correct procedure to determine to cost of driving, but making one or two errors (computational or transcription), and the conclusion is consistent with the computation shown.

2) Showing that the cost to drive is $461.30, but not stating which is more expensive or concluding that flying would be more expensive.

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This information was produced by Partnership for Learning, a nonprofit organization working with schools to help you learn more about our state’s academic standards.