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Making History: The High School Class of 2008

Ninety-five percent meet the WASL reading and writing standard.

SEATTLE – JUNE 3, 2008 – The high school graduating Class of 2008 is the first to be required to meet higher standards for reading and writing, and they’ve passed with flying colors. Ninety-five percent of this year’s 67,000 seniors who took the Washington State Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) reading and writing tests met the new requirement for graduation, according to data released today by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

“These results prove that all students are able to achieve at high levels when challenged and given the opportunity,” said Larry Ehl, executive director of the Partnership for Learning, an organization which has long supported education reforms to better prepare students for post-high school success.

OSPI will not know the graduation rate of the Class of 2008 until September but based on the high passage rate and the fact that in other states testing requirements have had little impact on graduation rates over time, Ehl noted, “There is no reason to expect that Washington’s graduation rate will significantly decrease because of the WASL. Credit deficiency continues to be the number one reason students don’t graduate within four years.”

He also added, “We commend the teachers, parents, educators, administrators and counselors for their hard work to ensure these students are leaving high school with a solid foundation of basic skills to succeed in today’s economy.”

Earlier today OSPI announced that of the 67,000 students enrolled as seniors as of April 2008, 91.4 percent have met both the reading and writing standard. But data shows that 3,000 students have never taken the test at all for unknown reasons. Taking those students into account, a remarkable 95 percent have met this new requirement needed to graduate.

“This news is very encouraging,” said Ehl, “but there’s still much work remaining to better prepare our children for a rapidly changing world. We need reforms to increase the number of students staying in school, and to help more students meet credit requirements (the number one reason students don’t graduate within four years.) We’re also way behind in math and science achievement. Our education reform efforts must continue.”

Students who have not taken or passed the reading and writing WASL will have another opportunity to do so in August. The state also offers several alternatives to the WASL that can be completed over the summer.

Partnership for Learning is an independent, statewide nonprofit organization that communicates about Washington State’s school improvement efforts and the need to better prepare all of our high school graduates for the demands of today’s global society. To learn more about Partnership for Learning, visit the organization’s website at www.partnership4learning.org.

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