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### **WASL changes praised by statewide education partnership**

*More students continue to meet standards, but the assessment will soon look different*

**SEATTLE – AUGUST 26, 2008** – Though scores for students in most grade levels remained flat this year, the state plans to take increased measures to improve testing and maintain high standards in the future. Eighty-six percent of 11<sup>th</sup> grade students in the class of 2009 who took the Washington State Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) this spring met standard in reading and writing and 62 percent have also met standard in math, according to data released today by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). This can be compared to the 83 percent of students in the class of 2008 who had met reading and writing standards, this time last year.

“Each year, more and more students are meeting state standards and parents and teachers are succeeding in getting them there,” said Larry Ehl, executive director for Partnership for Learning, an organization which has long supported education reforms to better prepare students for post-high school success. “But we must continue to examine ways to improve the system and make sure each student receives the education, assessment and support they deserve.”

For 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in the class of 2010, 75 percent met standard in reading and writing and 47 percent have also met standard in math. Science and writing scores in most grades saw improvement, despite the fact that reading and math scores overall remained flat. Gains were also made among Hispanic, Native American and African American students. The states’ overall trends have been up for the last decade: In 1999, just 51 percent of 10<sup>th</sup> graders met standard in reading and 33 percent met standard in math.

“I’m very proud of what our educators and students are doing. And, with a little more support, I think we can optimize the system and make sure more students succeed,” said Terry Bergeson, Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Next year, the WASL will be significantly shorter for elementary and middle school students. In most grades, the length of assessment will be reduced by 30 percent allowing educators to administer the test over one day as opposed to two.

“These changes have been in the works for some time,” said OSPI spokesperson Shirley Skidmore. “We’ve heard feedback from teachers in the field that testing time needs to be reduced and testing dates should be pushed to the end of the year to make tests more cumulative and we’re responsive to that.”

Accordingly, both elementary and middle school students will face fewer extended-response and short-answer questions in reading, math and science tests. OSPI is also considering whether or not to move testing dates earlier or later in the year, based on concerns from educators that tests are given too early, but scores to need be received sooner. There will be no reduction in test time for high-schoolers, due to the fact that passing the reading WASL is now a requirement for graduation.

“We’re pleased that OSPI has listened to the concerns of educators and parents and is improving the WASL, while maintaining the high standards required to prepare our students for success,” Ehl said.

*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](http://www.partnership4learning.org).*

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