



Special Education and State Testing

Students in Washington are tested every year in English language arts (ELA), math and science. Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams determine how each student in special education participates in state testing. For help with additional questions, please email waas@k12.wa.us or call 360-725-6089.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: ALL GRADES

How do students in special education participate in the state testing system?

The following options are available:

- **State tests:** Students take the state tests, with or without accommodations.
- **State tests with the “Basic” option:** Students take the state tests at grade level, with or without accommodations — but IEP teams adjust passing criteria from “Proficient” (Level 3) to “Basic” (Level 2). A Level 2 score cannot be used to meet state and federal accountability, but can be used for graduation.
- **Alternate assessments:** Students with significant cognitive challenges can take a performance-based assessment to show their knowledge and skills.
- **Off-grade level tests:** Students take a state test in one or more content areas, with or without accommodations, at either an elementary or middle school level. Students pass by earning “Proficient” (Level 3) or higher.
- **Locally determined assessments:** Students take one of the approved published achievement tests in one or more content areas. These assessments are facilitated at local level and the scores submitted to OSPI. Students must meet pre-established cut scores.
- **Awareness level waiver:** For students with disabilities at extremely low levels of cognitive interaction, IEP teams and their school districts can pursue a waiver from further state testing and the state graduation requirements linked to the state’s assessment program. This is intended for a very small population of students with disabilities.

What accommodations are available to students with an IEP?

Accommodations include changes in setting, the way tests and questions are presented and how students respond. Some examples include a scribe for students unable to write their own responses, physical supports (e.g., special pencil, large-type test), time extensions, etc.

All testing accommodations must be consistent with the accommodations a student receives on a regular basis at school and must be included in a student’s IEP.

Accommodations manuals:

- Smarter Balanced (bit.ly/SB_accom)
- Other state tests (bit.ly/WA_accom)

Who determines how a student participates in the state assessment system?

The IEP team, which includes a student’s parents or guardians, decides what state tests to use based on the student’s needs. These decisions, as well as any decisions about accommodations for the student, are made during the annual IEP team meeting or, if the IEP team agrees, during a meeting closer to the testing period. All decisions must be documented in the student’s IEP.

What information about state testing must be documented in a student’s IEP?

1. A statement of appropriate accommodations necessary to measure the student’s achievement and performance on statewide assessments.
2. If the IEP team determines that the student will participate in the alternate assessment, the IEP must include a statement of:
 - a. why the student cannot participate in the regular assessment, and
 - b. why the particular assessment that is selected is appropriate.
3. If the IEP team selects the alternate assessment, the IEP must also include short-term objectives or benchmarks aligned to alternate achievement standards.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

Students with an expected graduation year of 2015 through 2018 must earn Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) or Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA) by passing state tests in English language arts (reading and writing), math and science.

How does a student in special education earn a CAA?

To earn a CAA, students in special education must pass the following state tests at the Proficient level, with or without accommodations:

- English language arts (reading **and** writing HSPE, OR 10th-grade ELA Exit Exam*, OR 11th-grade Smarter Balanced ELA exam*),
- Math (11th-grade Smarter Balanced math exam* OR algebra I or geometry EOC exam) **AND**
- Science (biology EOC)

* These tests are not available until spring 2015.

If students do not pass one or more of the state tests, they can meet testing requirements with the CAA Options listed below, available after a student takes the tests at least once:

- **Collection of Evidence:** The COE is an evaluation of a set of work samples based on classroom work prepared by the student with instructional support from a teacher. Students must meet eligibility criteria.
- **GPA Comparison:** A student's grades in English and/or math courses are compared with the grades of students who took the same courses and passed the state test. This option is available to students in their 12th-grade year who have an overall grade-point average of 3.2.
- **College Admission/AP/IB Tests:** Students may use their math, reading and/or writing scores on the SAT reasoning test, ACT or ACT Plus Writing tests, specified Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) examinations, or Smarter Balanced assessments (starting in 2015) to show they have key skills expected of high school graduates.

How does a student in special education earn a CIA?

Some students in special education have additional assessment options to earn a CIA instead of a CAA:

- State tests with the "Basic" option.
- Alternate assessment.
- Off-grade level assessment.
- Locally determined assessments.

See a full description of each of these options on page 1 of this document.

Do students get different diplomas if they earn a CAA or CIA?

No. All students get a "regular" diploma.

If a child does not participate in state testing, can he/she earn a diploma?

Students must complete all state and local school district graduation requirements to graduate. Attempting or passing state assessments is one of those requirements.

For a student whose cognitive development is identified at the awareness level, IEP teams and associated district personnel can pursue a waiver from state testing and the state graduation requirements linked to the state's assessment program through an awareness level waiver.