

The Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science (WCAS)

The Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science or WCAS is part of the statewide assessment system called the Washington Comprehensive Assessment Program or WCAP.

The WCAP is designed to give information to teachers, students, and their families about what students know and are able to do. It also indicates whether they are on track to be ready for success in college or career when they graduate from high school.



Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science

WHAT

Washington has adopted science standards called the Washington State 2013 K-12 Science Learning Standards, which are the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). The standards tell us what students should know and be able to do in science. The standards are designed to help students understand how science works in the natural world. They also help students learn the knowledge and skills they need to be successful after high school.

The WCAS is aligned to the science standards. The WCAS tests a student’s ability to think critically and solve problems.

This new assessment uses questions that bring together science content, practices, and concepts. It also covers more than one science domain during the test, such as life science, Earth and space science, physical science, and engineering design.

WHO

All students in grades 5, 8, and 11.

WHEN

Each school selects its own testing window. Testing can begin in mid-April for grades 5 and 8 and mid-May for grade 11.

You will receive additional information from your school about the specific dates and times of testing.

HOW

The WCAS is a computer-based test that has many different types of questions that allow students to interact with the test content in exciting new ways. For example, your student might be asked to write a short response, collect data from a simulation, and analyze data by making a graph. The test should take approximately two hours to complete.

WHY

Measures what students know and can do, fostering science education at every grade level.

Do students with disabilities take the WCAS?

Yes, unless the student's individualized education program designates an alternate assessment.

What resources are available for students?

All students have access to a variety of tools; for example, in grades 5, 8, and 11, students have access to a calculator, and in grades 8 and 11, students have access to a periodic table.

Students with disabilities have additional supports. All of the accessibility resources help students gain fair access to the test and do not affect the students' scores in any way.

How can I help my student prepare for the test?

You are an important part of your student's education. Some things you can do to help your student are:

- Discuss the purpose of the state tests with your student. Help them be relaxed and comfortable.
- Tell your student that you and their teacher want them to do well and try their best and that you are both there to support them.
- Make sure your student is prepared for school on test days as they would be before every school day.
- Review test results with your student and discuss with their teacher where your student might need additional help.



The WCAS is aligned with the Washington State 2013 K-12 Science Standards. The science standards can be found at <http://www.k12.wa.us/Science/Standards.aspx>.

Training Tests for the WCAS are available at <https://wa.portal.airast.org/training-tests.stml>. The purpose of the training tests is for students to get comfortable with different item types, tools, and other features of the computer-based test.

Additional Information

More information about the WCAS can be found on the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's Science Assessment Web page at <http://www.k12.wa.us/Science/default.aspx>.

For more information about your student's scores, contact your student's teacher and/or the school office.

