



# Educators' Views on the State of Education Reform and the Washington Assessment of Student Learning

January 2004

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Northwest Professional Educators (NWPE), a nonprofit, nonunion professional educators' organization, mailed a statewide survey (see attached) to nearly 1100 educators (members and nonmembers) in February 2003 to elicit their views on the effectiveness and consequences of Washington's education reform program.

Our survey includes voluntary answers of a cross section of educators by grade, subject, socio-economic area, and district size who wished to express their opinion. It is not scientifically validated. However, we believe NWPE's survey to be the only statewide survey of Washington educators on critical reform issues.

Some notable results indicate that of our 107 respondents:

- 67% believe that the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) distracts from classroom instruction;
- 75% believe that the WASL has caused a narrowing of curriculum to students' detriment;
- 72% believe that EARLs and the WASL have impeded teacher authority to make routine decisions on classroom management and instructional methods;
- 31% are aware of ethical violations in WASL administration,
- 69% believe that the expenditure of state funds on the education reform agenda tied to the WASL has not been an efficient and effective use of state education dollars for raising student achievement;
- 46% believe teachers' working conditions have deteriorated since the implementation of the education reform system; and
- 77% believe the WASL should be discontinued in favor of an effective but less costly student assessment and accountability system that includes multiple measures such as locally chosen assessment tools and standardized tests such as the ITBS, NAEP as a sampling to determine program strengths, etc.

After receiving the Senate's request for information, NWPE offered 350 educators the opportunity to complete an e mail questionnaire in January 2004 to express their specific views on the WASL. A copy of the questionnaire and all responses are included. Some patterns emerge that are of special concern, namely,

1. There is agreement that the WASL has focused instruction with both positive and negative results for student instruction;
2. There is serious disagreement with use of the WASL as a high stakes test for graduation (due to reliability/validity issues and other concerns) or as a tool to judge teachers' performance;
3. There are varying degrees of teacher knowledge regarding EARLs and the WASL;
4. There is concern with the WASL's harmful effects on student and teacher morale;
5. There is worry over cost of the WASL which is draining resources from more valuable educational pursuits; and,
6. There is anxiety among educators caused by some apparent heavy handed tactics to implement restructuring goals. This has resulted in educators fearing to speak out about their doubts or of using their professional judgment about how best to educate their students.

Based on the results of our survey and questionnaire, NWPE calls for a course correction as soon as possible for the sake of our students, our profession, and our economy.

For more information, please contact: Cindy Omlin, NWPE Executive Director

## **NORTHWEST PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS JANUARY 2004 WASL QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. Do you think the WASL should be a high stakes test for graduation?
2. What is the educational value of the WASL?
3. Describe the effects of the WASL on:
  - a. Student instruction
  - b. Parents
  - c. Teachers
  - d. Special Education Students
4. Describe affective/behavioral impacts of the WASL on:
  - a. Students
  - b. Teachers
5. Please comment on the WASL's:
  - a. Structure
  - b. Administration
  - c. Scoring
  - d. Sharing of Results
  - e. Objectivity/Subjectivity
  - f. Costs (direct and indirect)
6. Are you concerned with remediation of students who don't pass the WASL?
7. Originally the WASL was designed to measure how schools were performing. Should it be used as a high stakes test of:
  - a. Teachers
  - b. Students
8. Other comments:  
Grade Level/School District (optional)

Educators from the following districts responded to the Questionnaire: Federal Way, Moses Lake, Eatonville, Battle Ground, Bremerton, Lynden, Quincy, Pateros, Mary Walker, Spokane, White River, Central Kitsap, Spokane, Clarkston, Camas, Tahoma, Kent, Sprague, Chehalis, and Puyallup.

### **1. Do you think the WASL should be a high stakes test for graduation?**

The WASL is not a scientifically valid/reliable test. It would be harmful to use it as a high stakes test for graduation. (Elementary)

No! Some students do not test well, and one test is not a measure of ability or competency across the board. Additionally there are MANY children in the educational system with unidentified learning disabilities and who are not allowed accommodations. A student in this situation might test 100% orally, but so much writing is required on the WASL - and all good teachers (Terry!) know that many unspecified communication disorders, physical disabilities, etc., involve a deficit in writing! (High School)

I think it should be one of the factors in determining if an individual graduates, but not an absolute requirement for graduation. There should be a way that scoring below standards on one or two sections could be balanced by good performance on other assessments, like final exams, etc. (4th)

No! (7th)

No. (5th)

No. Many students who would not pass the WASL will be very successful in the work force, and some that would graduate and do fine in the working world are likely to quit school if they become too discouraged by the WASL. I see major discouragement at the upper elementary level, much less at the High School level. This test does not allow for a range of abilities or talents. (4th-6th Special Ed)

Yes, I do . . . if "graduation" means that we're trying to prepare the full spectrum of our students for collegiate work. However, as our forefathers wisely understood, not all people are college-material or college-bound; we have lost sight of the vocation aspect of education, and we are no longer permitting any of our students to have IQ's under 110 (including our mentally-handicapped students, two of which are mine). In this Bushian version of things, everybody is a high achiever bound for college. So, REALLY, my answer is NO, it should not be a high stakes test for graduation. I do think it should be considered as part of college entrance requirements and possibly for a certificate of mastery at High School graduation. (K-8 Music)

I have assisted in the administration of the WASL test for four years now and am not convinced that the test measures very much of what students ought to know. There appears to me to be an underlying agenda to many of the questions that force the student to answer in a certain way. Questions on such issues as global warming, for example, operate from the assumption that such warming is, in fact, happening. (High School)

It would be alright to have a comprehensive, minimum level competency test for graduation, but the WASL should NOT be it. (High School)

No. I am in favor of a test as a part of a number of assessment tools to determine graduation qualification. Relying on one test relies too heavily on both the validity of the test (WASL is questionable) and the test taking ability of the student on that day the test was taken. (Student Teacher Supervisor-College)

I do not like the format of the test for the most part. There needs to be standards, but I question if this is the one. (6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>)

No.

I think it's a bunch of \*&%\$. (High School)

No. It is not a standardized test. Also, special ed students are required to take and pass the test which is above their ability level and will never be able to pass the test. (High School)

No. (2nd)

Should NOT be a graduation test because it is too subjective. IF Washington State believes graduation requirements are not stringent enough, the Legislature should FULLY FUND whatever new requirements they institute. i.e., more math, English proficiency, science, geography, economics, government, etc. (Elementary)

No. (K-12 Migrant-Bilingual)

No. Middle School Spec Ed)

Absolutely not. (High School Math)

I think it can be a valuable measure much like SAT's have been for college. It should not be a high stakes test for graduation. My personal opinion is that the Science portion (I'm a Science teacher) is a joke and not consistent. (High School Science)

For the majority of students, no. What it is is demeaning—"one size fits all." By emphasizing sameness, we undercut any real education. All kids should know this stuff and a lot more. But WASL forces us to abandon everything worthwhile in order to assure the minimum. Result is that we get the minimum. Thus WASL diminishes standards, instead of raising them as intended. (High School)

I believe the WASL score should be included with the graduation diploma. (Middle School)

No. It is a waste of taxpayer money. (High School)

No. (Middle School)

Never . . . because it is a performance based test on a process development of individual students. (3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>)

The WASL could be one component used for graduation. Graduation requirements should include grades received in content area classes for material produced in addition to test scores. (3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Reading Specialist)

Absolutely not. OSPI's own research states the WASL should not be used for INDIVIDUALS—only as a systems check. (2nd)

No.

No! I teach English Language Learners and the injustice of this test is obvious to all - OSPI included- whose response (I was told) was "We know it is a farce for ELL students to take this, but we are afraid schools might try to hide students in that category"!!! That is clearly illegal and no school would risk such stupidity. (High School)

No. High stakes tests in general, and the WASL in particular, should not be used as a graduation requirement. (High School Science)

No. (High School Science)

No, I do not. (4th-6th)

No. (3rd)

No.

If the WASL is going to be used it should be worth something. It should be a requirement for a type of certification on a graduated diploma system. (High School)

## 2. What is the educational value of the WASL?

Not as an assessment. The writing WASL has educational value in that it requires every student at a designated grade level to do critical writing. Importance is assigned to it because everyone does this assessment at the same time; the students are encouraged to do their best by teachers, administrators and parents. However, it does not measure the EALRs that are benchmarked at the designated testing grade levels. **The legislation that mandates this test specifies that it should measure what is taught and that Essential Academic Learning Requirements be developed.** The EALRs were created by OSPI to direct teachers as what should be taught/learned at each grade level. The WASL is not coordinated to the EALRs and does not measure them consistently. (Elementary)

There is NO educational value intrinsic in the WASL. This high stakes test is not even aligned with the WA State EALRs. (Two of our teachers monitoring the test have done an item by item analysis.) Science, although in process of development, is completely unaligned with the EALRs. (High School)

If the WASL is properly structured, i.e. follows the EALRs, then it should be a reasonably good assessment tool for students and schools. (4th)

Thought processes (5th)

It increases the standard for the lessons taught in the classroom. On the negative side, the extreme focus on WASL learning means other important education is being omitted, like Social Studies and the Arts. There's not enough time to teach them. (7th)

It can be used to improve writing skills, but I am very concerned with the level the test is written at. 4th graders, not yet in the developmental stage that includes abstract reasoning, are asked to respond to questions beyond their development. Students who know the information but lack the abstract reasoning fail this test. (4th-6th)

The WASL is forcing teachers to change teaching methods; whether or not these are best teaching practices isn't clear to me. The WASL is getting some parents involved in their children's education, which is a good thing — and I think may be of higher value than forcing teachers to adopt new and not-necessarily-proven

teaching methods. The WASL helps to focus the state to certain educational goals, which is a good thing, except in doing so it does not recognize the difference between educating ranch kids in Eastern Washington and educating urban kids on Tacoma's Hilltop. (K-8 Music)

I suppose that one could argue that the WASL test shows that the students have learned at least something. If that is the assumption, then why don't our students take regionally or even nationally administered tests so that we can see how they compare to students in other states? (High School)

I believe it has helped fuel an awareness in Language Arts of what good writing is all about. It has little or no effect in Math classes. (High School)

It has forced schools to communicate about curriculum and assign responsibility for teaching. Schools and teachers are finally talking to each other and aligning curriculum so that it makes sense over the long term. The WASL also sets a standard (inappropriate in this case) for students to reach. (Student Teacher Supervisor-College)

Those who test well, do fine; struggling students do not; and others just don't even try. And what about SP-ED, dyslexia, learning disabled, etc.? (6th-7th)

Valuable for assessing higher level Bloom's skills but seems narrow for assessing content. (High School Science)

To whom???? Student, parent, teacher, school district or the Federal Government? To me . . . nothing. (High School)

I do not see any educational value in the WASL. I believe in accountability but this is the wrong way to go about it. (High School)

It helps teachers and students set goals for education. (2nd)

The WASL has forced schools to really work harder with students who are slipping through the cracks. But the subjectivity of the answers makes it more difficult to really assess exactly what areas students need to improve to meet a standard. The standards are not quantitative. (Elementary)

I think it makes us all work harder, but it's worth it. Prior to this, how many times did a single student complete a unit on whales or dinosaurs? Now, there is much more communication between grade levels and between subjects. I think the WASL has revolutionized our education system. (6th-8th)

The WASL has put a focus on the subjects the WASL tests, but killed the subjects it doesn't cover. (K-12 Migrant-Bilingual)

Not much, since it doesn't affect ongoing instruction or help affect changes in instruction on a daily basis. (Middle School Spec Ed)

Although the WASL has forced educators to align their curriculums, we are really now teaching to the test which is a poor way to educate kids. Since we don't get results back with an opportunity to reteach and retest, the test is obviously not about the learner but, about the school. For that kind of data, we could simply test a sample of the students, say, 100 or so should do. (High School Math)

It forces schools and teachers to teach to the test and that is a very poor way to teach. I think the WASL can hurt the education process if we allow it to dominate our curriculum. (High School Science)

Reality is there is only one value of the test—practice for other exams students will take in college. (High School)

You learn how to use different strategies to take tests. (Middle School)

Learning to take the WASL test. (High School)

There is little to no educational value in my opinion. (Middle School)

Instruction direction for teachers. (3rd-4th)

The educational value is an assessment that will assist teachers in determining areas in which students need to improve. As a reading specialist, the WASL helps me evaluate students' needs which, in turn, can be used to implement content and lessons. As one goal of teaching is to help students be successful academically, then the components of the WASL can be viewed as the standard measuring this academic success. However, it should not be viewed as a complete demonstration of a student's academic abilities. A testing situation is unique in that it is timed and limited in scope of content. In the classroom, students have more time and fewer restrictions to achieve their potential. (3rd-4th-5th Reading Specialist)

If it was valid, it would have some value for teacher diagnosis of students. As it is, it is not of value because it has developmentally and non-aligned items on it, contains format complexity, contains cultural bias, does not include the Standard Error of Measurement when determining pass/fail, contains "brain teasers" instead of fundamental math skills and applications. (2nd)

The test itself is ok, but I think it is overrated.

No more valid than the much less expensive Iowa test that has been used for years. (High School)

There is NONE! The WASL is only good as a poverty indicator. (High School Science)

It forces schools to pay attention to certain areas of instruction.

It teaches students how important adults feel testing is, and it enables students to feel the pressure of performing earlier in life. (4th-6th)

It gives teachers an idea where non-educators want our kids to be educationally. (3rd)

I think the presence of the WASL has increased the overall effectiveness of instruction and the involvement of the learner in the learning process. Teacher awareness, parent awareness, and student awareness have all increased in regards to just what needs to be learned (EALRS). Accountability is good as long as the standard one is being held accountable to is appropriate. (3rd)

It is a measuring device to determine the level of learning provided. The value is only in the information gathered to indicate weak areas in curriculum or teaching methods.

I am not sure if the WASL is the best thing educationally. I think that it is providing a strong motivation for teachers and students to study certain areas. At the same time it gives implied permission to cut other areas of curriculum to bolster test scores. (High School)

### **3. Describe the effects of the WASL on (a) Student Instruction:**

Frustrates students because it does not measure what is taught. (Elementary)

Helps with focus, but on the other end, causes extreme stress resulting in some very real and comprehensive physical symptoms, missed school. (High School)

It certainly provides focus for 4th grade instruction. We do a lot of things in WASL-like format, but I don't think that it means we are "teaching the test." I think there is an adverse effect on math instruction as the math portion at 4th grade concentrates on the wrong things. It means we have to cut short some of the basic skills instruction in order to get the kids ready for the kind of fluff the 4th grade math WASL presents. (4th)

Teachers teach to the test. Basic skills are forgotten. (5th)

It forces focus on the EALRs. (7th)

Students missed out on valid instruction in other areas in order to get them ready for the WASL. Teachers had to spend a great deal of time teaching students how to take this test. (4th-6th)

It has forced reforms of educational practices without understanding the merits and detractions of doing so.

Teaching (at least in the elementary grades, where I am) is now "to the test" and we've had to drop the "extras" (like field trips, integrative units, special events), that used to hold the interest of kids, to make time for drilling them on test procedures. (K-8 Music)

The WASL test gets heavy emphasis throughout the year, but I'm not sure that the kids care too much about it. Their attitude is that it doesn't count and doesn't affect graduation so why get all lathered up about taking it. (High School)

In math, almost zero. In English class there has been a great deal of demystifying clear and concise writing. (High School)

On one hand, it has streamlined instruction. Teachers cannot float by teaching their favorite things anymore and neglect other areas. However, it has forced certain instruction based on when the test is administered not when the students are ready to learn. An example of this is teaching basic multiplication in the second grade when the students have not mastered addition and subtraction yet. There is a big push to get all these skills covered by fourth grade when they are intellectually inappropriate for most children. More time needs to be spent on the basics and making sure students understand basic concepts. I do appreciate the time spent teaching students to understand why they are doing what they are doing. However, due to intellectual inappropriateness of the material, a student may very well know why they are computing a math problem a certain way and yet get the wrong answer because they have not honed the basic skills. A major component is also missing in this test in the form of feedback for the individual student. A teacher gets a class report but does not know how to specifically target individual student needs from the test. Students themselves are not aided by the feedback when all they learn is that they passed or not. They do not come away with specific achievements or areas of concern to work on. It is a shot in the dark when a student fails the writing portion. What part? How can the student work to overcome this? One would never know because the tests are unavailable after they have been graded. (Student Teacher Supervisor-College)

Art, music, dance, sports, humanities and cultural activities are long gone and students just are forced to do basic stuff. (6th-7th)

Our science content at least has been narrowed to only the content that is addressed in EALR 1. I also focus on written communication skills more since that is a "WASL SKILL" and a life skill, but I probably would not have emphasized it as much if it wasn't a specific WASL type skill. Also, whereas there are other concepts that are neglected to accommodate EALR 1 content I would have skip some CH's anyways due to our time limits. EALR 1 made that selection process easy. . . I don't include non-EALR 1 content in my curriculum. . . there's not time for more! I and my kids are crammed as it is to do just the EALR 1 content! Most other teachers don't even finish that much. (High School Science)

Students "stress." (High School)

My administrators are telling us to teach to the WASL. (High School)

Instruction is more focused. Unless the school days are longer, science and social studies are difficult to fit in. Unless days are spent planning lessons to incorporate them into reading, writing, and math. (2nd)

Areas not covered on the WASL are given less time. (Elementary)

It totally guides student instruction. My students can complete more complex tasks and share more information, thanks to the WASL and all the preparation teachers have put in. (6th-8th)

Totally tied to the WASL. (K-12 Migrant-Bilingual)

Students miss a lot of good instruction because they are being "taught to the test". (Middle School Spec Ed)

Student instruction: Student instruction has become much more narrowly focused. (High School Math)

Teaching to a test is the wrong approach for student instruction. (High School Science)

Minimal. (High School)



Instruction is designed for the test to be taken successfully despite student aptitude and attitude. (Middle School)

Makes only those things on the test important. (High School)

The WASL forces teachers to teach the style of answer required by the test as well as the information covered. (Middle School)

Lose about 1 month's worth of content areas. (3rd-4th)

Stress due to the duration of the testing over a period of days. Does demonstration of learning require this extended period of time? In the classroom, I provide quizzes, written and oral assignments on specific items to determine the learning that has occurred. (3rd-4th-5th Reading Specialist)

It has derailed instruction into teaching to the test because the WASL does not test fundamental math skills. Mathematics is the hardest hit by the direction the WASL has taken instruction. Teachers know that if they don't teach children particular brainteasers, they won't pass the WASL. This perverts education away from all the many fundamental skills students SHOULD know by the end of 4th grade. (2nd)

It causes teachers to focus classroom instruction toward the test. Test-taking skills are embedded in instruction—but that is no change. (High School)

Most teachers devote too much time teaching to the test! It wastes time! (High School Science)

Causes instruction to focus on specific things.

There is much emphasis on learning the style of the WASL and how to respond in WASL format because the results of schools are published. (4th-6th)

Limits the curriculum to WASL prep topics and items. (3rd)

There is a lot of pressure to learn. There seems to be less time for "fun", which is not completely a bad thing, but kids are kids, and need to have fun. We all do things better when we can have fun and enjoy doing it. I think the WASL is putting a lot of pressure on kids at an early age. On the other hand, I think we are giving kids the message that they need to take their learning seriously and put energy and effort into their learning. Holding kids responsible to their "job" is good. There is a fine balance that needs to be maintained between being serious learners and learners who are having fun doing their task. We want kids to end up loving to learn and becoming life-long learners. (3rd)

It takes away time spent in elective areas to focus on teaching WASL specific areas (that may be a "good" or "bad" thing).

Some teaching to the test, and increased "threats" of "this is going to be on the WASL, so you need to get ready for this. . ." There is a drop in the variety of classes that some students are able to take, as they prepare for WASL testing. (High School)

### **3. Describe the effects of the WASL on (b) Parents:**

Frustrates parents because they cannot see the final graded test. Mistakes have been made in the past and they don't want their children to be victims. (Elementary)

Fortunately, this is one of the few benefits of the WASL in my opinion. 75% of parents have given up parenting and any ownership. FINALLY now some parents care and take ownership in their children's education. . . now, it involves them TOO. Unfortunately, there are some parents with a "what are YOU (the school system) going to do SO my kid can pass the WASL" attitude. These parents STILL don't believe they have any responsibility for being involved in their children's education. Suggestion: OSPI could develop parent friendly remedial work for parents to instruct and support students at home. (High School)

Some parents get pretty stressed about the WASL, but generally there doesn't seem to be a big problem for or with parents in the area where I teach. (4th)



Parents want their kids to learn basic skills. Thought processes come later. (5th)

Increased concern & anxiety over their child meeting grade level standards. (7th)

Parents are scared for their kids, and some, due to this fear, put undo pressure on their kids to perform. This only disables the kids further. Some parents, on the other hand, are very supportive in the ways they know how to be. (4th-6th)

Those parents that are involved in their children's educations are probably more so now and probably more stressed. Those parents that aren't (the ones that never show up for their children's parent-teacher conferences, never show up for their children's school performances, don't sign and return report cards, don't monitor and assist their kids with homework, don't monitor their kids' TV access, etc., etc., ad nauseum) still, for the most part, aren't; and they are the first to blame the TEACHERS for the failures of the administrators and "The System" thrust upon the teachers. (K-8 Music)

I don't think most parents get too worked up about the WASL either since they don't perceive it as being necessary for graduation. It's just another test but it doesn't mean much now. I will be interested in parental response when they learn that their son/daughter won't be graduating because they didn't achieve a satisfactory score. (High School)

Frustration at not knowing how to prepare their children for it. (High School)

Huge stress on parents who try to calm nervous and frantic children who understand the nature of "high stakes" at the fourth grade level (or even before. Students as young as Kindergarten hear of the WASL and feel the tension in the air). Parents also have to spend time coercing students who have failed the test twice that it is in their best interest to take it again at the 10th grade level. (Student Teacher Supervisor-College)

The haves have it all together; those in the cycle of poverty are just trying to get by, as are their children. (6th-7th)

The majority of our parents don't seem to support "the WASL" however they are not opposed to the emphasis I have put on written communication and the ability to explain ideas in writing and speech since these are valuable life and academic skills as well. (High School Science)

"Stress", "worry" (if they care) (High School)

Minimal. (2nd)

Parents are left out of the loop in assisting their children because they never see the graded tests. Though schools try to inform parents about WASL, most parents don't speak education jargon, nor do they understand a test that, in some cases, has no correct answer. Again, the subjectivity of the WASL injures parental involvement. (Elementary)

Parents realize there is an outcome, something we are all working towards. I believe parents think more highly of our schools. (6th-8th)

Becoming aware that the WASL is the focus of their child's education. (K-12 Migrant-Bilingual)

Parents are probably stressed that their children won't pass the WASL. Parents of Special Ed kids wonder why their kids have to take the WASL, because if they could pass it they wouldn't be in sp. ed. (Middle School Spec Ed)

Parents are largely clueless about the test. If they knew what the test has done to the education of their children and to the morale of their children's' teachers, they would become a powerful voice in the elimination of this ridiculous and expensive experiment. (High School Math)

Confusion and inappropriate expectations. (High School Science)

Irrelevant (High School)

Parents use the results as a rating for their child's school and/or teachers and use it for voting for or against levies/ bonds. (Middle School)

Makes them think we're doing a good job. (High School)

Some parents that are worried about their child's performance on the test are buying study guides and making their children study and prep for the WASL. This is ridiculous. The SAT is bad enough; they don't need to be doing this to junior high students let alone High School students. (Middle School)

Very stressed out. (3rd-4th)

I'm not sure what parents understand about high stakes testing except that it affects their child. Most parents were tested in school but their graduation was not granted based on one test score. (3rd-4th-5th Reading Specialist)

Many parents seem not to be concerned about it. Some are anxious and see the folly of children's future being decided by one test. I know teachers who are parents and they do not let their sons/daughters know the results of the WASL because they're afraid it will impact their self esteem too much and they will do poorly in school. (2nd)

I don't believe most parents see it much different than our other mandated tests.

ELL parents are not politically vocal; they are usually simply thrilled with opportunities their children have in our schools; I would venture that most are not aware. (High School)

Some parents put undue pressure on their children to pass the test; the value of the education the students are actually receiving is undervalued. (High School Science)

Minimum or no effect. (3rd)

Some parents think of it as a primary SAT or ACT and put undue pressure on their kids. (4th-6th)

They become worried and focused on WASL preparation for their child. (3rd)

Higher stress levels to make sure their child passes the test. (High School)

### **3. Describe the effects of the WASL on (c) Teachers:**

Frustrates teachers because they cannot see the final graded test. It would be valuable to see where student weaknesses are so they can be re-taught effectively. (Elementary)

Good: forces grade levels to communicate and coordinate to align curriculum. Problem is: the focus is on grade level teachers: 4, 7, and 10, who merely happen to be teaching the grade level when the WASL is given. The stress is unreasonable and unwarranted. These teachers are "held responsible" by the system for test results that are out of their control involving transient students, at risk students, Spec Ed students. . . students who simply don't care. (High School)

As I said, it sure provides focus for the year, but I don't really have a problem with it. (4th)

Too much time spent on planning to teach to the test. Kids need basic skills first. We cannot teach them how to think. (5th)

STRESS over not being able to cover the material required to have a hope of passing the WASL and FRUSTRATION that other topics are ignored or omitted from instruction. (7th)

Teachers are spending way more outside of school hours than they previously did, to the detriment of their families and themselves and, therefore, their students as well. New teachers especially suffer from the added pressures and distractions from learning what they need to in order to be successful teachers. (4th-6th)

My colleagues and I are working way overtime (e.g., I worked full-time every day of our so-called "summer vacation" to prepare a WASL-based music curriculum for K-5 for my district) to do our very best with the directives handed to us. These teachers I know, in the Eatonville School District, are serious, professional, capable and student-focused educators . . . and they are stressed to the max about the repercussions on their students who don't make the grade (the kids whose parent is in prison and they're bouncing around foster homes or worse; the kids of the druggies; the kids of the single parent working two jobs to make ends meet and who never has time to be involved with their kids; the kids of those ineffective parents who can't or won't raise their children with responsibility, respect, and discipline; the kids who are just- or under-average IQ or have learning- or behavioral-disabilities making them incapable of learning in the same way that the above-average kids learn; the kids who don't test well under stress; the obnoxious kids who purposely blow off the test, or were told to do so by their anti-WASL parents. . . ) and the repercussions on the teachers who are held ultimately accountable except, WHERE'S THE TEST FOR THE PARENTS WHO ARE "LEAVING THEIR KIDS BEHIND" — AND THE TEACHER HAS TO TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT!!!!!!! (K-8 Music)

I think that most teachers have a "soldier on" attitude about the WASL. Nobody is on the teachers' side on this one. District and building administrators do as they are told by OSPI and pass the orders on to the teachers. The teachers union has a very cozy relationship with OSPI and doesn't want to upset it so they don't offer much objection either. Any parent who cares enough to question the WASL is branded a loony and ignored. Teachers, then, put the best face they can on the WASL whether they believe in it or not. (High School)

Teachers who can think for themselves know that many of the efforts that school districts are involved in with teachers are totally asinine and pointless. We have faculty meetings and workshops on how to help students pass the WASL, and the whole time we know that until the WASL is mandatory for graduation, students are NOT going to take it seriously. As even one administrator was willing to admit: "If you weren't forced to fill out your income tax return, would you sit there for 7 or 8 hours and toil over it? But that's exactly what we're asking our students to do. Take this test for 7 hours just for chuckles." (High School)

Puts huge undue stress on teachers to teach to the test as opposed to teaching concepts to students. This can be evidenced by a recent article in the Spokesman about teachers who cheat on the WASL. (Student Teacher Supervisor-College)

They teach to the test. They compete with their peers for their class to do better, they pressure the students.

As a teacher I feel the pressure of teaching WASL skills in the context of my WASL content area; however, I have enjoyed it, too, knowing that written communication and analysis and evaluation and other higher level skills are valuable. I love reading the thoughts that my kids put to paper after stimulating discussions and inquiry. It has also made me more inquiry based in my science lab time. I use the WASL experimental design format for all my labs now. I have not enjoyed the pressure I put on myself to write my tests similar to the WASL structure. Grading them is miserable. . . It takes forever! (High School Science)

It depends on what grade they teach. . . if they are administering the WASL. Some teachers seem to try to teach "to" the test — they definitely "stress." They try to help those students who most likely won't "make the grade", but that is not always possible (e.g. transfer students, ESL students who just moved into the country, high risk, etc.). For those who have to administer an "alternative WASL". . . major stress. (High School)

The WASL is a major disruption to our school schedule and impacts all of our students even though it is only given to the 10th graders. The administrators are implementing a new daily schedule during the time the 10th graders are taking the test. (High School)

Teachers are more focused but perhaps also more frustrated. It is very difficult to include all EALRs in teaching. I think burn-out is higher. (2nd)

Teachers are torn between doing what they know works and new unproven theories that are mandated due to the subjectivity and age inappropriateness of many of the 4th grade WASL math test items. Teachers are forced to drop whole sections of instruction they would use because it doesn't directly benefit students on the WASL. Well-rounded students used to be the goal; now it's getting as many as possible to pass the WASL. (Elementary)

More stress, yes. More guidance on exactly what we should be teaching. More directed in-service and training. (6th-8th)

Speaking to each other about how ridiculous it is. (K-12 Migrant-Bilingual)

As a special ed teacher, I think my students are wasting their time with the WASL. There is nothing I can teach them that will help them pass the WASL. (Middle School Spec Ed)

These students will never pass this test. Therefore, all schools in Washington with special ed student will be failing schools according to federal law. (High School Math)

Elimination of hands on learning because content must be "covered".

A constant, nagging worry—not that we won't measure up, but that our actual value to our students will be ignored. (High School)

Teachers are pushed to limits of time and energy to focus on WASL testing skills instead of subject content and enrichment. (Middle School)

Makes them teach to the WASL. (High School)

The test makes educators more concerned about students. (Middle School)

On edge all year long. (3rd-4th)

It appears that the teachers in the grades which require WASL testing feel the most pressure. This seems School ludicrous as the students haven't just been in their class during school years. It also appears that the elementary teachers are not really cognizant of what is required on the 7th and 10th grade WASL. If the requirement for graduation is passing the 10th grade WASL, then coordination of academic curriculum should begin in 1st grade. My opinion is that students are being set up for failure as there is no consistency across the state in school districts to set objectives that will assist students in being successful. Therefore, even if a school district or building sets specific objectives to meet the goal of passing the 10th grade WASL, students coming into that system from a different system have not had the benefit of those objectives. The state has EALRs but are they being used to create curriculum? (3rd-4th-5th Reading Specialist)

Most teachers who give it feel hassled by it because it's not basic skills and application of basic skills. The other teachers think it's pretty silly to put much stalk in it. They feel insulted when perfectly good students fail the WASL and they know there's nothing wrong with the children's abilities. Some have cut out or down on non-WASL subjects like the arts. Teachers are outraged by the NCLB scheme because they can see through what's going on—charter schools for everyone. (2nd)

Most teachers I am aware of see it as additional material they have to get the students ready for.

My frustration is extreme. (High School)

The WASL is demoralizing for many teachers. Some of us spend as much as two hours per day with our High School students for each of the 720 days in the students' High School career. BUT, we are considered incapable of determining whether our students have learned anything during that time?? The WASL is unnecessary! (High School Science)

Forces teachers to address specific things.

Some teachers feel pressure from administrators to make sure students do well. (4th-6th)

Teacher focus curriculum, sometimes exclusively, on WASL prep material. (3rd)

It is hard not to feel pressure to "teach to the test" rather than to "teach to the EALR." There is often too much interest in acquainting students with the "WASL format" rather than making sure students get a variety of exposures to many different formats of instruction and assessment. I do think that the presence of the WASL keeps most teachers "on target" with their instruction, by increasing awareness and accountability for teaching the EALRs. (3rd)

Some fear and confusion on how the test is going to affect their jobs, and how this ties into No Child Left Behind. (High School)

### **3. Describe the effects of the WASL on (d) Special Education Students:**

Many get one-on-one help taking this test/assessment. (Elementary)

The criteria is clearly too narrow for those students who should not be tested or given an alternative test. And, if given an alternative test, OSPI should be responsible for providing a STANDARDIZED one. (High School)

Requiring testing of special ed students should be done on a case-by-case basis and should be done with due consideration of their developmental level. For some kids testing is pointless. For instance, I have a child who spends all day in resource room and only reads at about an early first-grade level. What is the value of testing that child? Kids who score below a certain level on IQ tests should be exempted or given alternative assessments. (4th)

Many Sp. Ed. students are pulled out of class to learn basic skills. Then the WASL is thrown at them to perform in a way they have not been taught. They need basic skills. (5th)

Increased stress by being forced to perform at a level they are cognitively incapable of accomplishing. (7th)

Many special education students are totally incapable of succeeding on this test. Many special education students are still learning the basics much less being able to produce what they know in the way this test requires. This test really scares them. I was proud of my special ed. students last year if they wrote anything on the test. They didn't even understand the questions. I praised them for whatever they could do, for trying. (4th-6th)

There is a growing resentment of the way these precious kids are just left in the dust to suffer in the taking of the WASL and then read their dismal scores. They already know they're behind; now, it will be their fault when the school and teachers are punished for not making adequate yearly progress and then the feds come in and take over. The test reinforces that they are the stupid ones. (K-8 Music)

I don't think that Special Education students should have to take the WASL. By definition, Special Education students have special needs and I can't see where the WASL speaks to those needs. (High School)

By definition, a Special Ed student is one who can NOT reach the bar. So why do we insist on making them try? Humiliation? What an exercise in stupidity! (High School)

Completely unfair to expect Special Ed students to pass this test. Of course, accommodations may be given but those may vary depending on whose definition of accommodation is used. Alternative Ed. students are also impacted. These are students who do not learn in conventional ways and have been told for years that they do not fit with the rest of the students. We educate them in more hands-on, kinesthetic, problem-based ways and return to testing them in conventional pencil and paper modalities. They should be expected to meet standards, but there should be flexibility in how a student can achieve that end. (Student Teacher Supervisor-College)

The WASL is very unfair to them, the teachers and the parents. I hate what we are doing to them. (6th-7th)

If the test is not modified for the ones with low cognitive skills then this test is way out of their ability. It challenges the ability of even the "average kid". (High School Science)

Not quite sure. . . it depends if they are cognitively "aware" of what the WASL is & the impact it can hold on their school record. Some Spec. Ed. students that I have spoken to don't know, don't care; however, there are some that really worry if you mention the word "TEST" to them. (High School)

Special ed students know they can't pass it and either skip school on those days or give up and don't try.

Doesn't take into account their special needs. (2nd)

There is no way most special ed students will ever pass the WASL. They need concrete questions that they can answer without assistance. (Elementary)

As a special ed teacher, I believe my kids can (and do) pass this test. They may not all pass, but they are growing by leaps and bounds. Every child achieves more when they have a goal. (6th-8th)

Given new requirements they can't meet. (K-12 Migrant-Bilingual)

Students are wasting their time with the WASL. There is nothing I can teach them that will help them pass the WASL. (Middle School Spec Ed)

Not appropriate for learning disabled students. (High School Science)

These guys get all the breaks anyway, including from WASL. Sp-ed is irrelevant. What is very relevant are all the other alternative kids—all the unconventional, blue-collar, hate-straight-rows-4-walls-and-bells kids. (High School)

Do what they are told. (High School)

Have no chance being that modifications to the test cannot be made for these students. (Middle School)

Attitude of why try. . . defeated already. (3rd-4th)

These students are in a special program but are still required to pass the WASL. How does that work? They are in a special program because they are not capable of being academically successful at the appropriate grade level. Shouldn't they be required to pass a test based on their grade level ability? What has been done in the past to allow these students to graduate? (3rd-4th-5th Reading Specialist)

Most special ed students flunk. Oh that's a surprise and really good for their sense of self—NOT. (2nd)

Very few of these students can even take the test. What about a category for the increasingly huge number of ELL students? (High School)

Requiring Special Ed students to TAKE (let alone, PASS) the WASL is ludicrous beyond belief and deserves no comment. (High School Science)

No effect.

The WASL helps emphasize that they are different in yet another way. (4th-6th)

They are forced to take a test most have no chance of passing. (3rd/Chehalis)

Many Sp. Ed. students feel discouraged and frustrated. There must be valid accommodations, exceptions, and alternative forms of assessments for students with documented disabilities. We would never expect someone in a wheelchair to scale Mt. Rainier on their own, or even with help. Many kids have disabilities that are not as obvious as being in a wheelchair to the observer, but are much more of a daunting issue for their learning capabilities. We must provide an avenue of success for these disabled learners if we are going to insist on testing them using the WASL. (3rd)

**4. Describe affective/behavioral impacts of the WASL on  
(a) Students:**

Frustration is never an effect teaching tool. (Elementary)

Horrible. Unreasonable. We actually watch the increase during WASL weeks of the number of student visits to the nurse's office and absences. . . students with mostly stomach aches and headaches and other anxiety related symptoms for students in grade 10. (High School)

None. (4th)

It is frustrating for both students and teachers. More time, money, and energy should be spent on basic skills, especially in the lower elementary. When 5th graders don't even know their facts by memorization, or even how to attack words phonetically, how can they pursue a test that requires more advanced strategies? (5th)

I've seen many students grow so frustrated at not being able to meet the expectations for this test that they give up, shut down and refuse to perform. (7th)

Students are scared by this test because of how much it is emphasized and because they fear future consequences it will have on them. Their fear makes it even more difficult for them to perform well on the test. Also, the length of the test is very hard on students. They get VERY tired at the end of each test day, much less at the end of two weeks of it. (4th-6th)

For the average and below average: Stress. Nausea. Tears. Fidgety. Mental blocks. Frustration and anger. For the above average who don't test well at this young age: Stress. Nausea. Tears. Fidgety. Mental blocks. Frustration and anger. For the above average who excel at everything they do regardless of other factors: Stress, at the minimum. (K-8 Music)

I notice a distinct attitude of resentment on the part of the students at WASL time. Some of them like the treats and special attention they get while the test is going on, but for most of them, the whole thing is a colossal drag. (High School)

A few valiant, teacher-pleaser types jump in there and do their best taking the WASL. It is not most students' idea of fun, so why knock yourself out? When a teacher starts talking about WASL-style math questions in class, the students' eyes glaze over and we've lost them. (High School)

Too much stress even at an early age. My kindergartener knows of the "WASL test" and is nervous already. The fact that the WASL is high stakes adds an additional burden to students. If they don't pass certain areas they begin to feel defeated as that is the only measurement that counts. If the student has trouble taking the test, anxiety, illness etc. on the day of the test it can skew results. If parents opt their children out of the WASL (as is their right to do so) the school is penalized a "zero" for that child's score. Enough of those can severely affect a school's overall score. Students may feel backlash if the principal or teacher feels penalized by the student opting out. (Student Teacher Supervisor-College)

Some "don't care. . . others planning on college or secondary school, get uptight and worry. (High School)

Many students have not taken the test seriously and think it is free time away from instruction. (High School)

Higher expectations lead to more stress for students, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. Below grade level scores lead to frustration and can have adverse effects. Some students do not do well on tests may lead to higher drop out rate. (2nd)

Still mainly unaware of the WASL's effects on their education. (K-12 Migrant-Bilingual)

Student currently don't care because it doesn't affect them. Will devastate students if forced to retake 5th year of High School. (High School Science)

None. (High School)

Students at the Middle School level become burned-out with the process of WASL testing. By the time the tests are administered, the rest of the term is can become unfruitful for both teacher and student. (Middle School)

Some students can't sleep, can't eat, worried, afraid they won't pass 4<sup>th</sup> grade, severe anxiety. I am so worried over the fact that this test is demoralizing countless students. A substandard label is becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. (2nd)

Little to none.

It is heart-breaking (no exaggeration) to watch ELL students who work very hard to understand take a test that is completely beyond their current abilities. (No one can grow a student in 7 months' time to a 10th grade



academic level.) Research indicates it is a 4-7 year process to become academically sound in second language. This doesn't mean we don't try! Students last year did one of three: gave up almost immediately, cried silently, or worked desperately with absolutely no chance of passing. It was like leading lambs to a slaughter. I resented completely the damage it did to their sense of progress. (High School)

Students complain about wasting time preparing for the WASL when they could be actually learning stuff. (High School Science)

Forces students to pay more attention to certain things, given that they want to pass it.

Some are too keyed up and live as if their college options and future careers depend upon how they do. (4th-6th)

Students receive instruction directly related to WASL testing. (3rd)

#### **4. Describe affective/behavioral impacts of the WASL on (b) Teachers:**

Frustration because precious time is being taken away from my program. (Elementary)

The administration of this test to teachers & staff is disruptive to the entire building at the High School level. Teachers at all grade level are impacted for two weeks during the giving of this test. (High School)

None. (4th)

How is a teacher supposed to meet their responsibility of covering the district's adopted curriculum, in say Math, AND adequately prepare students for a test by April? (7th)

Teachers who are very experienced and good at what they do fear negative consequences to themselves and their school if kids aren't successful on this test. (4th-6th)

For the 4th grade teachers: Stress. Nausea. Tears. Frustration and anger, at being blamed for low WASL scores, like the parents and K-3 teachers and the schools these kids used to go to aren't part of the picture. For all teachers: More stress from having to spend additional time on lesson planning to justify everything that's done in terms of EALRS and WASL. (K-8 Music)

Many if not most teachers seriously question the value of this test. They are not inclined to speak out against it for fear of losing their jobs, but I note resentment on the part of teacher as well as students. (High School)

What would you think if you saw airlines putting \$\$\$ into flight safety, and airports putting \$\$\$ into airport safety, but airplane makers NOT putting any landing gear on the planes? That's what we're doing pouring money into more teacher training until the test is required. We're missing the most crucial point!! An unrequired, cumbersome, difficult test is viewed as totally irrelevant by our students. (High School)

STRESS for the students to perform. A need to teach to the test as opposed to concepts and measurable information. (Student Teacher Supervisor-College)

Administrative pressure to teach to the test. (High School)

Higher expectations lead to teacher accountability but at the same time teacher burnout. (2nd)

Hoping for things to change for the better, but trying to cope with WASL pressure. (K-12 Migrant-Bilingual)

Log jam of students in remediation; remediation will dominate the schedule—not AP or advanced classes. (High School Science)

Lots of faculty room grousing (High School)

Teachers at the Middle School level become burned-out with the process of WASL testing. By the time the tests are administered, the rest of the term is can become unfruitful for both teacher and student. (Middle School)

On edge all year long. (3rd-4th)

Dread going through the test. Those who don't give it sympathize with the poor teachers who do. One 4th grade teacher said she never thought she'd be wishing for the good old days of the ITBS. Many teachers feel insulted that 70% of the students are labeled substandard. Many times whole schools with children below the poverty line are labeled as failures when the teachers are doing a wonderful job. (2nd)

Frustration.

I accept trying to do better in teaching—that is not the debate, but WASL and NCLB laws are evidence of such ignorance that only make the best of us ready to do something else for a living. How is this occupation the rare one that the standards are created by those outside the profession-or enough removed they have no idea of the current challenges? (High School)

Many teachers spend too much time teaching to the test when they should just be teaching their subject(s). (High School Science)

Frustrates many teachers because it is a curricular constraint.

In 4th grade they run out of time for things like art projects and a longer recess on a beautiful spring day. They must teach how to write out how you got your math answers when some kids can just do the problems intuitively and have difficulty with writing. (4th-6th)

Teachers fear that their job performance will be tied to their student's WASL results. (3rd)

## 5. Please comment on the WASL's

### (a) Structure:

This assessment depends largely on essay questions. Rubrics are required to grade essays. The rubrics aren't shared in the scoring so scoring results are not helpful. Often the student is confused as to how the assessment wants them to answer. No rubrics are given to them to give them direction. This is especially hard on the younger students. (Elementary)

The timed/untimed nature of this test alone results in it being NON-standardized. The second biggest criticism is the actual structure of the test. Why is one test booklet not used, with a computerized answer sheet (for the purpose of student identification) for ease of distribution and handling? (Similar to ACT or SAT). It would be less expensive and easier AND LESS EXPENSIVE than sorting four booklets for each 10th grader and keeping track of each booklet. (High School)

The math portion at 4th grade is way off base. I think at this level the test should concentrate on basic computational skills and very direct "story problems." The things they test now require us to depart from the district curriculum quite a lot and get the kids ready for the WASL type questions, many of which are developmentally inappropriate. (4th)

OK. (5th)

I like it, but it is narrow in content (if it is supposed to assess general content) by taking specific content concepts and asks you to apply them to a scenario. (High School Science)

I find no fault with the way the test is given. Students are not loaded down with a long string of tests each day; the whole thing is reasonably paced. (High School)

The math section is a poor math test. One of the worst I've seen in many years of teaching math. It does NOT tell whether or not a student can do math. It is more a communications test. In the extended answer sections, if you get the correct math answer, you only get partial credit. If you are not a good explainer, you

get fewer points. As one of our district's WASL math specialists stated, you cannot pass the math WASL unless you do well on the extended answer portion. If you are getting scored as much if not more on your EXPLANATION as your numerical answer, then it is by definition a communications test. A student's score on the WASL tells no one anything about what the student knows or understands mathematically. That is some math test! (High School)

Too long. An amazing amount of time is spent in preparation as well as administration of the test. Too much educational time is lost during this period. (Student Teacher Supervisor-College)

Excessively expensive. State does not cover all costs to districts and taxpayers are being sold a false sense that students are achieving more. (Elementary)

Very structured, of course. I like that the math section is broken into two days. (6th-8th)

Inconsistent in Science (High School Science)

The structure is good for quality thinking. (Middle School)

Excellent. (High School)

Reading is well done. Math has too many different steps to achieve the right solution. Writing is ludicrous. No way does it reflect the real life of a writer. (3rd-4th)

It appears to basically resemble an achievement test. However, I am uncertain what achievement it is supposed to measure. Is it measuring the EALRs? Is it measuring content? Is it measuring a specific curriculum and/or academic objectives? (3rd-4th-5th Reading Specialist)

It's too long (children become fatigued) and it's too short (can't possibly contain a good sampling of what children should know) i.e. they're trying to accomplish, with one test, something that it can't accomplish. Good teachers give many tests a year to determine the grade the child gets. In this way, they evaluate a broad sampling of student knowledge and skills. (2nd)

The structure is OK, however students have to be taught how to take this kind of a test.

Nothing better than older standardized tests. (High School)

Its open-ended structure makes it too subjective. (High School Science)

Strange.

WASL preparation of students has changed the face and focus of education—from the curriculum we buy and how we choose what we buy, to "teaching to the test." (3rd)

## **5. Please comment on the WASL's (b) Administration:**

Cost of test distribution, management, administration in terms of school staff hours is clearly not included in the reporting of the cost to taxpayers. In our building, it takes 6 staff members at the top of the state pay scale to SORT THE TESTS for DISTRIBUTION (2 full work days) and to RESORT and REPACK and ACCOUNT FOR THE WASL TEST BOOKLETS (2 full work days) at the 10th grade level. This does NOT account for the time it takes a staff member(s) to create a schedule for testing, to instruct teachers on test administration, to be available during the test weeks to answer questions, provide alternative settings for testing and to organize and administer test makeups. Multiply these numbers TIMES the number of schools and grade levels at which the WASL is administered, and include that in the "cost" to taxpayers! The administration of this test has become so time consuming that our district has created a stipend position for the purpose of organization and distribution. (High School)

OK.

I am bothered by the fact that the WASL is administered by people who have little or no specific training in its administration. Most teachers approach this test in the same way they would a classroom exam when the WASL is a lot more. I often wonder about the uniformity of assistance and instruction that untrained teachers might provide even when they are doing their very best. (High School)

They are panicking and go well beyond common sense in emphasizing how important it is to the district that lots of kids pass the WASL. They made their point a long time ago, but haven't figured out that they are trying to fix the wrong part of the machine. Their efforts remind me of a few years ago when the State decided that if ALL teachers were required to have a Master's Degree to get a teaching certificate, then students would learn better. The reason students fail is NOT because the teacher doesn't know what he/she's doing. Over 90% of the time it's because the student is chronically absent and/or doesn't hand in much work! (High School)

Not as standardized as it should be—a bit loose in my opinion. (High School Science)

Administered by teachers who are not trained.

No flexibility in time or place. (2nd)

Between a rock and a hard-spot. Dare any administrator to publicly criticize the WASL. . . .a real career ender. (Elementary)

Seems very equal from school to school. I wish it wasn't so near Spring Break, as that sometimes cuts our window down. (6th-8th)

Fine. (High School Science)

Fair. (High School)

Not excellent, but the best they can do. (High School)

OK (3rd-4th)

The duration seems to be excessively extended. Why can't it occur in one day? (3rd-4th-5th Reading Specialist)

Takes up too much instructional time. (2nd)

It takes too much time to administrate. Our school administrator(s) had to use all spring break organizing for this—it is a HUGE time commitment, and it naturally crosses all our minds of "what a waste". (High School)

It takes up too much class time!!!! (High School Science)

Hap-hazard.

Both local and SPI officials have told us directly to teach to the WASL test. (3rd)

Too long, and disruptive to the entire student body. (High School)

## **5. Please comment on the WASL's (c) Scoring:**

This is how the test is being given the appearance of being valid. Only one scorer is budgeted for in grades 4 and 7. Two scorers and ideally three will be required for 10<sup>th</sup> (because of the high stakes issue). The validity is established by how closely the scorers agree or match in scoring. If one scorer is consistently grading differently than other scorers (checked against the same student), that scorer is dismissed. It's delphi technique, an estimation not a grade. (Elementary)

What the \*H\* do the WASL scores MEAN? Since the WASL is not standardized, the test results seem subjective (pass/not pass) with NO helpful information to use in remediation or feedback to tell the student/parents what is needed for improvement. (High School)

Will someone please explain why it takes 9 points to pass the writing portion? If one reads the definition of what a "3" is in Content, Organization, and Style, and what a "1" is in Conventions, those definitions certainly sound like work that meets standards. Yet, if a child gets a 3 for COS and a 1 for conventions for both writing prompts in 4th grade, that is a score of 8, which does not meet standards. For the past two years, our school has had a 70% pass rate in writing. If the passing score were 8, we would have been over 90% and I think it would have been a more accurate assessment of how many kids were meeting standards in writing. (4th)

Thumbs down. (5th)

The pass or fail nature of the test is a problem. Many students fall just barely below passing!! Even still they feel like they aren't good enough because they "failed." Students just below passing are not bad students; they are very good students. In students' minds the word "failed" is associated with getting an F grade; on this test, just below passing (or "failing") is more like getting a B grade, but the test does not allow for this. There should be levels of achievement; that would take into effect the natural differences between students. (4th-6th)

I sat through a session with one of the 4th grade math scorers . . . and was horrified at the extremely poorly written test questions that were used on the children. The problems were ambiguous, with multiple answers possible given the data presented. The students were expected to make assumptions in each problem that were not consistent across the range of the problems. Students were docked points for using math language, like "remainder," rather than everyday language like "extra" or "more." Students who got the wrong answer were scored higher than some students who got the right answer but used a different method in obtaining the answer. I have great confidence in the scorers; I have NO CONFIDENCE in the system that teaches them how to score. (K-8 Music)

I am really bothered about this aspect. I recently learned that the actual tests are scanned onto compact discs and then the original tests are shredded. The discs are then played on a monitor similar to a computer monitor for the graders. I wonder what would happen if a parent of a student who didn't do well on the WASL demanded to see the original test. I suspect that that parent could successfully demand that the score be invalidated for that student. (High School)

They take points off for not labeling your graph, for not doing the work INSIDE the box provided, and for not putting arrows on the ends of your number line. They are NOT looking for understanding, they are nit-picking! (High School)

Not enough direct feedback on scoring. Students receive general scores. Too expensive. Too time consuming. (Student Teacher Supervisor-College)

Seems OK, but time consuming and expensive because of how time consuming it is and the training involved. I don't know too much about it though. (High School Science)

Very inconsistent. Some parts of the test they look at structure instead of content and other parts they look for content instead of structure. (High School)

Outrageous lack of oversight and expense to OUT-OF-STATE contractors. Teachers need graded sheets returned to evaluate. Students who opt out are considered zeros on district-wide score. Penalizing districts for parents' rights is one more way OSPI strong-arms administrators into compliance. (Elementary)

Seems very accurate, particularly from the classes my fellow staff member and I have taken. (6th-8th)

Scoring a test by a rubric is a pathetic way of measuring knowledge. On a recently released mathematics item from the WASL a student was given a 5, perfect score, for an incorrect answer. Apparently the student's "mathematical reasoning" was very good; good enough for a 5 even though the conclusion (i.e.: the answer) was wrong. (High School Math)

Subjective (High School Science)

Way too subjective (as is any written essay) (High School)

Scoring is time consuming. (Middle School)

Expensive and too flexible. (High School)

The WASL holds value for individual schools in the fact that they are able to follow a class through the 4th, 7th, and 10th grades and compare the number of students failing or passing a given section of the test. However, this does not take into account poorly written and/or graded tests so its real value is very limited. (Middle School)

Too difficult bar in writing. (3rd-4th)

I have read about the scoring but have never scored the test. However, if humans are scoring the test, then it is subjective. (3rd-4th-5th Reading Specialist)

It's a secret—teachers can't see the scored WASL so they don't know if it was scored properly or not. There is a high rate of scorer error even according to OSP's own reports. It's also subjective. One scorer

may award a 4 to an answer and another may award a 2. That could make the difference between a child passing or failing that test. (2nd)

Hand scoring is good for creating summer jobs for teachers but is not a very efficient way to score a test, not to mention the cost.

I'm not informed enough to comment on this.

Scoring is too subjective. It is too costly. And the graded tests are destroyed so grading mistakes cannot be corrected. (High School Science)

Interesting.

Has proved to be unreliable and inaccurate. It is very expensive. (3rd)

## **5. Please comment on the WASL's (d) Sharing of Results:**

It is reasonable to expect receive a scored essay test back. (Elementary)

The results are too slow to be effective in course placement for remediation. (High School)

Good. (5th)

The timing of these results is not advantageous to students, nor are they specific enough for teachers to utilize them for future instruction. Teachers are not allowed to have a clear understanding of exactly what will be assessed – the test prep material is too vague. (7th)

Share with whom? Most schools keep IQ test results confidential, why not WASL results? (High School)

Too little, way too late. If I could have the results before school was out in the spring, I could motivate more students to take it seriously. (High School)

Poor. Not enough direct feedback to be helpful to the student. (Student Teacher Supervisor-College)

I don't know too much about it. (High School Science)

Too late. (2nd)

Complete lack of accountability to state taxpayers because actual test sheets are destroyed, not returned to districts for analysis. We're told to believe the results we're handed. (Elementary)

I wish it were more timely. It's difficult to have a different teacher sharing results, and, for some students, it's not a good way to start the year. It does help in goal setting for schools and individual students, though. And, results at the end of the year might get "lost" in all the activity. I think the state could do a better job of informing parents what the results mean, compared to the student and their previous performance, other students in the school, and students across the state. I'd also like to see some comparison with comparable schools. (6th-8th)

Media only prints who fails the test. (High School Science)

Slow. (High School)

Sharing of results can be like comparing apples to oranges. A group of students year-wise may have a lot of high level readers but is then compared to a previous group with a high percentage of low level readers. (Middle School)

Teachers can't see the scored WASL so they are kept in the dark about how their students did. (2nd)

The printed results we receive are good, readable, and understandable.

It is no surprise that schools with very high free-lunch, transitory student population do much worse than richer, more stable communities. One could closely guess results by location of schools. (High School)

One of the best uses of a test is as an instructional tool. Feedback from the test can cement/promote student learning. But with the WASL, students never see the test again and CANNOT learn from it. (High School Science)

Circus-like.

We were promised, teachers, that school results would not be compared and since the very first trial years every year's results have compared school results in newspapers and on radio and TV. (3rd/Chehalis)

## **5. Please comment on the WASL's (e) Objectivity/Subjectivity:**

The WASL is very subjective and cannot give the kind of value check the legislature wants it give. (Elementary)

Subjective, non-standardized. . . NOT OK for a HIGH STAKES TEST What about the test that is evaluated at the END of the evaluators' day? (High School)

Thumbs down. (5th)

The fault with any standardized test is that the experiences and life-knowledge of our students is not standardized. You can't convince me that a test appropriate for a 9-year old Hispanic girl in Pasco is appropriate for a 9-year old WASP boy at Charles Wright in Tacoma. From the questions I've read for 4th graders, I see them as more subjective than objective. (K-8 Music)

I question the content of some of the questions, but I am also curious about the standards that the graders apply to the written portions of the tests. Essays, by their very nature, express subjective views of the writers. How do we assure that graders will grade content (sentence structure, paragraphing, spelling and the like) and not inject their own opinions into their grading? The remote nature of the grading process makes this even more crucial. (High School)

I feel they are testing for what THEY feel is important, NOT what most math teachers feel is important. (High School)

I don't know too much about it. (High School Science)

Very biased.



WASL is a highly subjective test. It is not fair to students, teachers or families. (Elementary)

The scoring seems very objective. Sometimes the questions seem out of line for the particular grade level. For example, 4th graders have a very difficult time writing on a prompt they don't connect with. I think the writers could do a better job of making sure interest is taken into account. (6th-8th)

Very subjective. (High School Science)

It has both. Neither is desirable.

"Objective" means dumbed down. Subjective allows too much room for political agendas and personal demeaning. (High School)

Sharing of results can be like comparing apples to oranges. A group of students year-wise may have a lot of high level readers but is then compared to a previous group with a high percentage of low level readers. (Middle School)

Acts like it's trying to be all inclusive and becomes flaky. (High School)

Answers to the WASL are subjectively graded. I realize that through training the graders can be brought to grade fairly uniformly, but it is impossible to remove all subjectivity. Not to mention that they are all grading uniformly to the bias of the instructor that teaches them how to grad the test. (Middle School)

Why so late???? The fifth grade teachers get the brunt of the stress. (3rd-4th)

The results should be obtained more quickly. As an assessment tool, I think it can be used by the next year's teacher(s) to implement instruction and lessons that will assist students to achieve academically. However, students would have to be assessed on an individual basis and I'm not sure that would occur in a Middle School or High School class. Perhaps, WASL transition classrooms need to be created to address specific areas in which improvement is needed if the goal is to assist students to succeed academically.

I think components of the WASL can be used in an objective manner to implement instruction if the goal is to pass the WASL. The question is: Does passing the WASL actually indicate academic success for the student? (3rd-4th-5th Reading Specialist)

Many items are subjectively scored. Jesse Jackson would score items very different from Jesse Helms. (2nd)

More subjective.

Not informed. (High School)

High stakes tests should never be subjective; the WASL is subjective. (High School Science)

In math: highly objective; in all other areas: highly subjective.

If a student is a poor reader the WASL is nearly impossible to take. The test is very subjective when it comes to scoring and how well a given school district has done in preparing students specifically for the WASL. (3rd)

## **5. Please comment on the WASL's (f) Costs (direct and indirect):**

The cost of scoring alone brings the cost of the WASL to an astronomical figure. The money spent on this "assessment" is beginning to eat away at classroom budgets and affect the efficiency of the classroom teacher. (Elementary)

PLEASE ask the LEGISLATURE to create a way to document the ACTUAL cost to taxpayers. Cost of test distribution, management, administration in terms of school staff hours is clearly not included in the reporting of the cost to taxpayers. In our building, it takes 6 staff members at the top of the state pay scale to SORT THE TESTS for DISTRIBUTION (2 full work days) and to RESORT and REPACK and ACCOUNT FOR THE

WASL TEST BOOKLETS (2 full work days) at the 10th grade level. This does NOT account for the time it takes a staff member(s) to create a schedule for testing, to instruct teachers on test administration, to be available during the test weeks to answer questions, provide alternative settings for testing and to organize and administer test makeups. Multiply these numbers TIMES the number of schools and grade levels at which the WASL is administered, and include that in the "cost" to taxpayers! The administration of this test has become so time consuming that our district has created a stipend position for the purpose of organization and distribution. (High School)

Outrageous! (5th)

The dollars being spent on this test could be utilized much more effectively to train teachers how to engage parents in supporting their child's education as a team player, rather than pointing the finger and fighting the very person who's trying to help their child. (7th)

I have only heard that the WASL is very expensive, however, I don't have any information on its overall costs. (High School)

It wastes a ton of time that could be better used actually teaching math to kids. (High School)

Way too much. I can only imagine what would happen to education in the state of Washington if the money spent on the WASL was funneled directly back into classrooms in the form of quality curriculum, implements, technology and support for students. (Student Teacher Supervisor-College)

Another spendy but unfunded mandate to the schools which are already struggling with punching-new-holes-in-the-belt-so-it-can-be-tightened-some-more budget concerns as state funding is cut back and teacher salaries are frozen and morale plummets. (K-8 Music)

Seems expensive to me. The question is does the WASL's value merit the expense. . . not sure? I don't think the schools should have to pay for a state required test if it is to assess basic education which is supposed to be fully funded! (High School Science)

The cost is absurd when compared to ITBS or other standardized tests with proven track records. Washington State does not have enough money to continue the present WASL and OSPI is pursuing adding more sections. (Elementary)

I think the cost is very high, of course, but I think it's worth it for the impact it has on teaching and student performance. (6th-8th)

This test costs a fortune and we (the public) are getting nothing for the expenditures. (High School Math)

Expensive—as is any government program. The private sector is always more efficient. (High School)

It is definitely a diversion of resources available for regular instruction. (Middle School)

Too expensive for the results accomplished. (High School)

Time and money that could be used to add more teachers to the payroll or be put directly into school programs that would actually help students. (Middle School)

Don't know. (3rd-4th)

I'm not familiar with this area. (3rd-4th-5th Reading Specialist)

The cost of the actual test has gone up to approximately \$75 for 10<sup>th</sup> graders. The secondary costs are rising. I've heard reports of counselors spending all their time shuffling through WASL scores. I don't have the particulars of that since that's happening in the High Schools. (2nd)

A million dollars plus to score these tests every year is not very cost effective, especially given the fact that our state budget is thin and that education is already the biggest cost to our state.

Already mentioned is the time costs just to organize it; then the time to administer it which is very disruptive for 11th & 12 grade classes as well. I frankly resent the 3 or more days lost. I have read that the state spends an obscene sum every year to the company paid to grade, but I don't have that figure. (High School)

Direct costs are WAY too high — a total waste of taxpayers' money. The biggest cost, however, is in the loss of instructional time during the administration of the test. (High School Science)

Too high.

Schools should be run on a local level. Mandating tests is expensive to the tax payer and the results do not offset the costs. (4th-6th)

There are many additional costs from the grading out of state to the time and effort of teachers specifically teaching to the WASL test items and curriculum procurement. (3rd)

The cost in administering this test could be spent in ways to help students learn, instead of just testing them. The implementation of the WASL does not help teachers teach better, or help them actually accomplish the EALRs. That is still left up to the teacher working harder and the students learning more. This is a punishment approach to motivation, saying "learn/teach or else!" (High School)

## 6. Are you concerned with remediation of students who don't pass the WASL?

Yes, because I don't know what is being re-mediated. It is not measuring the EALRS consistently. (Elementary)

Yes, as is everyone else, including students and parents. Given that there is NO data or feedback from the test, it makes effective remediation IMPOSSIBLE. If there is no TARGET skill, how do we remediate? (High School)

I think a skills based test would best measure the need for remediation. Aren't we preparing students to go into society as productive citizens? (5th)

Yes! Why do we have the mindset which insists every student is college bound? Why are we unaccepting of the fact that not all individuals are "wired" to have the same cognitive abilities? They cannot all be Einsteins! (7th)

No. Good students sometimes don't pass the WASL. The test is too hard. (4th-6th)

Do they get remediation? A lot of our kids who don't "pass" the WASL have scores that are only 10-20 points below the passing mark. These kids don't get LAP, CHAPTER, or SPED because they test out of those. (K-8 Music)

Since this test is eventually projected to be the deciding factor for graduation, it is only reasonable to allow students to take the test more than once. (High School)

Sure. Right now that is more than 75% of all 7th grade students. They will be barred from taking Pre-Algebra or Algebra in the 8th grade because they couldn't pass one lousy, poorly worded, pseudo-math test. (High School)

Will there be any students left to remediate? One would think they would just give up after being told they were a failure so many times. I am not aware of any remediation being done with students who don't pass it at earlier grades. (Student Teacher Supervisor-College)

Not really. We already pass them on year after year. Do you mean to tell me the state will really hold back all those who fail the 11th grade WASL after teachers have passed them through the education cycle? (6th-7th)

Yes, but who's going to pay for it!?!?! We already paid for them to take the test the first time. Not to mention the significant amounts of time and \$\$ for classroom instruction to prepare them to take it, too. (High School Science)

Yes.

Yes. This will be a major cost to school districts. (High School)

Yes. (2nd)

Yes. The State has not funded remediation or even made plans. (Elementary)

Of course. The state needs to fully (100%) fund that remediation, but what a fantastic opportunity for those kids who don't pass. Often, they are written off in High School. This will force schools to give one last academic push. (6th-8th)

Yes, but we're enjoying the fact that it doesn't become THE diploma dispenser for a few more years. (K-12 Migrant-Bilingual)

I'm not sure there is effective remediation at this time. (Middle School Spec Ed)

For 6 years now we have not answered the question "what do we do with students who do not pass the test?" Yes, this concerns me. (High School Math)

Definitely a big problem with scheduling. (High School Science)

In general, no. (High School)

No, that may help combat complacent attitudes. (Middle School)

Yes. And with the laxness I see now, there will be many who fail early with more failing in High School. (High School)

Definitely. (3rd-4th)

What remediation is occurring? Remediation should be considered mediation if the student has not acquired the learning necessary to pass the WASL. What is the evidence that the student received the necessary instruction to pass the WASL? If passing a test is the goal, then there needs to be a specific curriculum implemented that provides effective instruction. (3rd-4th-5th Reading Specialist)

The WASL should not be a gauge to determine who needs remediation. This is stated right in OSPI's own technical reports. (2nd)

Yes. Some students just don't test well but in the classroom perform very well. Most go on to some post-secondary education and are very successful, including the professions. That's why colleges ask for a student's transcript to get a bigger picture of the student. A student's consistency is a better picture of success than a one shot test.

Watching ELL students take it and their knowing that there is no hope sets up a new obstacle to add to all the other ones they have, I am not optimistic. I have had the unpleasant experience of teaching Washington State History in High School to those who failed it in Jr. High. I pulled out all the stops to create genuine interest and saw little positive results. That class, no one wanted to teach. I would guess a remedial WASL class would have the same resentful climate. (High School)

No. I'm concerned with the remediation of the test. We should cut our losses and TOSS it now! (High School Science)

No.

No, a good work ethic can carry a student further than a high score on the WASL. (4th-6th)

Oh yes. I believe that in 2008, when the certificates of mastery are dependant on 10th grade WASL results, that parents will have the right/responsibility to sue a given school district for not properly preparing/educating their child. (3rd)

It is going to be extensive and destroy a lot of the diversity in education that is now available. Teachers are a finite resource, and if a teacher is teaching WASL 101, they can not be teaching a class that would, in fact, be more valuable to a student's education. (High School)

**7. Originally the WASL was designed to measure how schools were performing. Should it be used as a high stakes test of (a) Teachers?**

No, because it does not measure what is being taught. (Elementary)

NO. (High School)

Do we judge college or university professors on how well their students do? Why is it JUST the teachers in K-12 being scrutinized here? How about parent accountability as well? We as teachers have little recourse when the parent refuses to do their part at home to see that their child has an opportunity to study, or even do their homework. (7th)

I can't make up my mind on this. (4th)

No. (5th)

NO! We will never see 100% of students passing this test, and that is what they seem to expect. The test might be useful in some arenas and with some students if so many things didn't hang on it!!! It might be a good test for high achieving students, but it is too hard for the average student! (4th-6th)

NO. It could be used as another diagnostic tool of teaching effectiveness. (K-8 Music)

Unless the WASL is intended to test material that students have covered or should have covered in class, it is not reasonable to hold them accountable for it. As far as I can see, there is a broad disconnect between the WASL and what goes on in the classroom. Nonetheless, I can easily see that this test and its results will be used to rate teachers. This means that teachers would be shooting in the dark trying to teach material in anticipation of such material appearing on the WASL. (High School)

I would welcome a pre-test at the beginning of the year and a post-test at the end of the year. I know I teach students a great deal of math. But with the WASL we compare one year's kids to the previous year's kids. And many of them aren't in our district more that a few months before we shove a WASL in front of them. Hardly seems objective or mathematically sound. (High School)

Again, this should only be one indicator of several of a teacher's ability. So many factors play into student test scores. . . many of which are out of the teacher's hands. (Student Teacher Supervisor-College)

Yes—some just need to go and earn their living somewhere else and not hurt children. (6th-7th)

No—not at this time. (High School Science)

There needs to be a standard comprehensive training and education of all teachers in the state so that all the kids have equal opportunities to be successful. I teach with a member of the state science WASL board and feel privileged to be able to know and understand as much as I do about the test and how to prepare our kids for it. Before this school I was at a school whose kids could barely read the test let alone the teachers have time or money to invest in learning about it so that they can prepare their kids to take it. However, I still feel inadequately informed and skilled to "teach to it". I think standards based assessment is great but I feel portfolios are a better tool.

No, but possibly a "review." More observation. . . critiquing/assessing & possibly "letting go" of those who do not "teach." (High School)

NO. (High School)

No, it should be used as a guideline for improvement. (2nd)

Absolutely Not. (Elementary)

Yes, but with student population taken into account. (6th-8th)

NO! (K-12 Migrant-Bilingual)

It should not be a high stakes test of any kind, but one of a number of measures and indicators of progress. (Middle School Spec Ed)

A test of any kind taken by the learner does not measure the value, the worth, or the ability of the teacher or the school. (High School Math)

A measure to be considered. (High School Science)

Absolutely not. But it might be used to pay those who do best more. (High School)

NO. (Middle School)

The test gives no valuable feedback of how teachers are doing. It is absurd to measure the success of a class on a given year against the success of a different class on the next year. There can be no valuable comparison. There are too many factors that affect the test results. (Middle School)

Not really. (3rd-4th)

Again, was a specific scope and sequence curriculum provided with a checklist so evidence is provided that what is being tested is being taught? For a measurement to be taken, then a tangible standard should exist. If this is not the case, then how can an accurate measurement occur? Which teachers are being measured—all or just those who teach in the grades requiring the WASL? (3rd-4th-5th Reading Specialist)

ABSOLUTELY NOT. (2nd)

No.

Absolutely not. No teacher stuck with WASL grade class (4,7,10) could logically be held accountable for being the last one handling the student before that test. Where has reason and fairness fled in this process? (High School)

No. (High School Science)

No.

No, opinions of students and parents should be the way a teacher's abilities are measured. (4th-6th)

Emphatically no. (3rd)

No, it should not. There are too many factors involved that the teacher has no control over. Teachers cannot make all students value their education, get students off of drugs, give students parents that care, provide money for food, give structure to their lives. These factors affect student learning in major ways, too. (High School)

## **7. Originally the WASL was designed to measure how schools were performing. Should it be used as a high stakes test of (b) Students?**

No, because it does not measure what is being taught. (Elementary)

NO (High School)

I can't make up my mind on this. (4th)

No. (5th)

NO, most students have no concept of the significance of such high stakes testing because there are no consequences at 4th and 7th grade, and all parents have to do is opt their child out of the test and the school takes the hit of their zero score. (7th)

"NO!" It could be used as an indicator of something, but for sure not graduation. (4th-6th)

NO. It could be used as another diagnostic tool of learning achievement. (K-8 Music)

I will be interested to see what happens on the day that a promising athlete who has been offered an athletic scholarship is unable to accept that scholarship because he/she didn't pass the WASL. I would imagine that lawyers are already lining up with retainer agreements in hand to accept such cases and to pursue them vigorously. (High School)

For most of the students, the WASL and grade point averages show some type of correlation. But for those who don't, do the dozens of passing grades discount the validity of the WASL? Or does the WASL mean that all those teachers didn't know what they were doing assigning passing grades? (High School)

If students received helpful feedback and were measured on age/developmentally appropriate items then it would be useful. It should also be one indicator of many different modes to tell if a student has learned. (Student Teacher Supervisor-College)

They can only reflect the level of instruction—judge the adults first, not the children. (6th-7th)

NO—not at this time. (High School Science)

Again. . . it depends on the academic history of the student... there are some students who do not "test well" or "freeze" when they know it is a "high stakes test," which of course it is. (High School)

NO. (High School)

No, it should be used as a guideline for improvement. (2nd)

Absolutely Not. (Elementary)

Yes, what other measure can we use? (6th-8th)

Not for a diploma. (K-12 Migrant-Bilingual)

It should not be a high stakes test of any kind, but one of a number of measures and indicators of progress. (Middle School Spec Ed)

A measure to be considered (High School Science)

Mixed feelings here. It is the minimum acceptable standard for everyone. But if it is all they have to do, there should be no High School at all. They should apprentice into a career at age 13 or 14. Maybe WASL at 8th grade—then a career or college track. (High School)

NO. (Middle School)

The test gives very little valuable feedback; therefore, having it be a determining factor for anything is unwise. It seems much more valuable to look at student performance over a career than to look at how they perform for a couple of hours two weeks out of one year. (Middle School)

Absolutely not. (3rd-4th)

It can be used as only one component as it does not measure the students' starting point. If all students' starting points are not equal, then it only measures against a normed average and does not measure either a students' progress or decline. What about students who come from outside the system? (3rd-4th-5th Reading Specialist)

ABSOLUTELY NOT. (2nd)



No.

No. Students already successful will succeed. Those who are not will still fail this. They get plenty of assessments without WASL. (High School)

No. (High School Science)

No.

No, some take tests well, but are inconsistent in turning in their assignments. Others don't test well, but are diligent in turning in work. Employers prefer to hire the latter. (4th-6th)

Emphatically no. (3rd)

If the test is a valid assessment, it should only be used to assess the student. Other assessments should be used to assess school performance that are valid assessments. (High School)

### 8. Other comments:

I have seen several of the actual questions. They are very questionable. I will not take the time to discuss them now, but anyone who makes questions like these a requirement, I do not trust. They are playing with our kids' minds. By the way, the questions can be changed at any time and are every year. Who is controlling what they are asking our kids?! No one I trust. If this was an objective test, this would not be a problem. (Elementary)

Don't get me entirely wrong. The WASL has brought about some much-needed focus on teaching practices and assessments. However, I think that the WASL — as a part of Bush's "Leave No Child Behind Even If They're As Stupid As I Am But Don't Have A Rich Daddy To Buy Them Into Private Schools" educational policies — has become a threatening tool with a mystique that far exceeds its actual efficacy. I'd like to see it take an equal stance to the other tests taken by students (ITBS, CBAs, and such). I'd also like to see it modified for less capable students, scored on the basis of the socio-economic level of the school, and I'd like to see the scores for students who do not take the test changed to a "Not Counted" rather than a 0, which pulls down the school average and makes W unhappy. (K-8 Music)

Every year, the WASL takes place the end of April; and every year the "Take Our Sons and Daughters to Work" day falls during this period. If we let the kids go, then not only do we miss a day of testing, but then we have the next day to try to get the kids back in the "WASL frame of mind." It is more than just the loss of one day of testing; it detracts from the pace and sequence of the whole testing process and is generally distracting, and all for an activity that is of questionable educational value. If in fact the state wants the WASL to be a high-stakes program, then we need to move the "Kids to Work" day here in Washington to late May, even June. If the WASL is to have the sort of priority that the legislature has intended, then we need to make that clear. There is nothing magic about this day - it was started by some private organization several years ago and intended to be just for girls, and the whole idea is totally voluntary. Someone at OSPI needs to bring this to the attention of the legislature and suggest that a state-wide "decree" go out that the "Take our Kids to Work Day" is changed from the third Thursday in April to some other day. (This thing has been a major irritant at our school as you may discern from my comments. For the past four years we have sent letters home telling parents that the third Thursday is "Send Your Kids to School Day" and that if they want to do the kids to work thing at a later date we will accommodate it. So far, parents have cooperated with us totally.) (4th)

If the state or federal governments came to the legal, or medical profession, and said to them, "Look, the malpractice suits are getting out of hand, or we want tort reform, clean up your act in ten years, or we'll do it for you." How much laughing do you think we'd hear? It's worthy to think that we can increase standards in public education, and we should, but how we're going about it with the WASL is insane. I say this because too many years have already gone by and we've allowed the standards to deteriorate so much that were expecting more than we can achieve in a very short time span. (7th)

I think that the No Child Left Behind legislation and its predecessors reflect a sincere concern on the part of the American people with the quality of the education that their children are receiving. I believe that the

Department of Education made a mistake in allowing each state to develop and administer its own test as a part of the compliance with the above mentioned act. It is not difficult to imagine 50 WASL-like tests with 50 different sets of standards. (High School)

I think a standardized, objective test (one with right and wrong answers) would be great. What is wrong with using the CTBS or ITBS or the Stanford Achievement tests? A test that everyone needs to pass is not a bad idea. But the WASL is the wrong test. (High School)

Unfair test; too much money spent with not enough feedback; results take too long; test takes too much valuable academic time away from teachers; too much stress on students. Find something that is fair, equitable, cost efficient and worthwhile. (Student Teacher Supervisor-College)

I am not in favor of the WASL, or possibly the way it is currently being used.

The Legislature should direct OSPI to suspend the WASL and utilize its current curriculum and assessment staff in conjunction with education departments from Washington State Universities to revamp it until it meets objective, clear standards or scrap it and choose an existing standardized test that meets NCLBA. (Elementary)

I know WEA members feel the same way, but all teachers' jobs are on the line. (K-12 Migrant-Bilingual)

The solution to all things is simple. No funding, no follow-up. Without funding all stupid ideas eventually disappear. Let the legislature, the union, the "do-gooders" holler all they want, march, get air time, and pass laws. But put up no money—ever. Then the rudderless can feel like they did some good in the world, without it actually affecting anyone. (High School)

The WASL is a complete and utter waste of time, energy, and public funds. Any value in it is negligible and negated by the fact that OSPI doesn't use the information correctly and instead publishes the useless AYP. (Middle School)

The people who write this WASL test must do a better job of researching and understanding the developmental stages of children. Obviously, they don't. (3rd-4th)

My opinion is that a K-12 portfolio would be a more objective demonstration of a student's progress in school. WASL scores would be one component. This portfolio would accompany the student to assist educators through the ability to evaluate student's academic strengths and progress. This evaluation would provide a starting point for creating curriculum and instruction that would assist the student to achieve academic potential. (3rd-4th-5th Reading Specialist)

The WASL is redefining mathematics. There has been NO public discussion of this fact. Many mathematicians and scientists strenuously DISAGREE with this redefinition and have endeavored to put states back on track. See [www.mathematicallycorrect.com](http://www.mathematicallycorrect.com). ITBS or some other proven test should be used as a low-stakes test. (2nd)

Some students are never going to pass a standardized test. If they understand the material and can move themselves on to the next level, are they less deserving of a diploma than those who do well on standardized tests?

If you want schools to do better get rid of tenure and give teachers financial incentive and rewards for making their students successful. The concept of the senior project makes more sense if you want to place some kind of finality for a diploma. Students have to put together a project and present it to a school board or group of adults and explain what they have done. With proper guidelines students have to pull together various aspects of their education to make their final presentation.

I absolutely support high expectations and in-building accountability for teaching the "best practices". Teachers should be teachable, too, but this political malarkey sickens the whole system. (High School)

Historically educators have eschewed high-stakes testing as not being beneficial to any of the parties involved in the process; the WASL is simply a case-in-point. (High School Science)

I believe that the WASL is a tool being used to increase expectations and student achievement in specific areas. It was conceived and implemented backwards. The state is just now publishing standards; that should have been done first then a WASL type test developed to help teachers and students meet the standards. Also the WASL was a legislative initiative with "educator input." It remains a political tool/weapon/bludgeon. The WASL is an example of good intention, poor execution. (3rd)

My experience suggests that if *Teachers* were subjected to a kind of WASL, even every two or three years, the controversy (indeed, even the need) for such "high stakes" student-testing would be obsolete.

As a librarian, I only indirectly deal with the WASL. My program covers occasional skills that may apply to their test taking. I don't know how most parents feel about the test but our teachers seem very critical of it both in time consumption and clarity for students. I am personally in favor of it in theory. I know ridding it of all the "bugaboos" is unrealistic.

If a topic is not on the WASL I am afraid that it will not have as much value in the eyes of the community and the government. If these things cannot be on the WASL (Social studies, art, music, etc.) there should be something of equal weight administrated on the school level that makes these areas on par with WASL assessed subjects. I know that the Social Studies has the Classroom Based Assessments that are attempting to fill that void. (High School)