



Understanding the Washington High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) and Measurements of Student Progress (MSP)

Overview of the MSP and HSPE

From 1997 through 2009, students in Washington took the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) until it was replaced by the Measurements of Student Progress (MSP) for grades 3 through 8 and the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) for high school students (reading and writing). In spring 2011, the End-of-Course Assessments in math were added as part of the state exit exams for grades 7-12, to replace the HSPE math section. In 2012, a biology end-of-course assessment will be added to the group of state tests. The primary differences from the WASL are that the new tests are shorter and available online.

Purpose of the MSP and HSPE

The purpose of the MSP and HSPE are to measure student progress and proficiency according to grade level rather than a specific academic skill or ability. State test scores are also used to report Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) according to the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Who Takes the MSP and HSPE?

Students in grades 3 through 8 take the MSP. Students take the HSPE in grade 10, and the EOCs in grades 7-12. English learners in the first year of study in the USA must only take the math and science assessments. All other English learners take a modified version of state tests, which is translated in six languages and instruction is given through audio CD. Students must provide answers in English. Students with disabilities are also offered an alternate assessment, and accommodation to take the test online or in paper format. Private and homeschooled students are completely exempt from state testing, though homeschooled students who wish to earn a diploma from a Washington state public school must participate in testing.

What is a Passing Score?

Scale scores are used to determine if a student meets or exceeds the state standard on the MSP and HSPE. In any case, a score of 400 is normally required on a subject test in reading, math (including EOC) or science to meet grade level. Scale scores are in the range of 200 to 575 depending on the assessment. The minimum grade level writing score for the MSP is 9 on scale of 0-12. The minimum grade level writing score for high school is 17 on a scale of 0-24. Scores are reported according to four levels- Level 4 (advanced), Level 3 (proficient), Level 2 (basic) and Level 1 (below basic).

Understanding the MSP and HSPE

Unlike the WASL, which included four point essay questions, the MSP and HSPE tests are short answer and multiple choice. The tests are administered in the spring of each year; the 2012 testing window is April 25 through June 1. The MSP and HSPE are not normative, but criterion-referenced tests in which students are tested solely on

their understanding of academic standards instead of their performance against other students. The schedule for grade-specific testing is below:

- Reading: Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10
- Writing: Grades 4, 7 and 10
- Math: Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10
- Science: Grades 5, 8 and 10

Understanding Washington End-of-Course (EOC) Assessments

During the last 3 weeks of the school year, students are required to take an EOC assessment in the math subject studied that respective year. The EOC is available in algebra, integrated math 1 and 2, and geometry. The tests are administered to grades 7-12. This test replaces the HSPE math section and assesses math proficiency on a subject area basis, rather than overall math knowledge as the former HSPE math test. Biology EOC tests will be implemented in spring 2012, and administered during the last 3 weeks of the school year to biology students.

Get Your Child Ready for the HSPE

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