

# Pupil Assessment



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# Pupil Assessment

This paper provides information on testing programs for elementary and secondary school pupils that are administered or coordinated by the Office of Educational Accountability within the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The first section of this paper provides background and definitions on assessment alternatives; the following sections outline current assessment programs, assessment results and uses, previous and current assessment initiatives, and federal requirements; and the final section discusses funding for assessment initiatives.

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## Background

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In recent years, pupil assessment has become the focus of broader educational reforms in response to national reports that the academic performance of U.S. pupils has fallen behind that of other countries, particularly in areas requiring more complex thinking skills. There is evidence of persistent gaps in performance between whites and minorities, economically advantaged and disadvantaged pupils, and males and females. As a result, greater emphasis has been placed on the purposes and content of pupil assessments and the consequences of test results for teachers, pupils, schools, and school districts.

There are three primary purposes of pupil assessment: (1) to evaluate the quality and level of pupil achievement and indicate what pupils, teachers, schools, districts, and states can do to improve their performance; (2) to provide accountability information (the relationship between public investment in education and pupil achievement); and (3) to provide information that can be used by teachers and pupils in decisions relating to remediation, program placement, and

career paths. Different types of assessments are administered depending on the kind of information sought. Below is a description, based on information provided from DPI, on the most widely used types of assessment instruments.

**Standardized Tests.** Narrowly defined, standardized tests are tests given to a large number of pupils with identical directions, time limits, and questions. Most standardized tests are purchased from commercial publishers. In the past, multiple-choice and true/false questions have been associated with standardized testing. However, recent developments in the field of educational testing have allowed test vendors to include short answer and essay questions in the standardized test as well. Standardized tests are used to measure knowledge of a particular subject or basic aptitude.

While standardized tests are available in a variety of skill levels and formats, two types of decisions are commonly made with their result: normative decisions and criterion-based decisions. Normative decisions measure a pupil's performance in relation to a norm group. Tests used to make normative decisions or norm-referenced tests (NRTs) compare the rankings of all pupils taking the test. Results from this type of exam are used to determine where pupils score in comparison to all other pupils. Test statistics such as percentiles, norm-equivalent scores, and standardized scores are used to make normative decisions.

The second type of decisions made with standardized tests is criterion-based decisions. Tests used to make criterion-based decisions or criterion-referenced tests (CRTs) measure how well pupils have learned specific curricular material. Unlike NRTs, a pupil's score is not compared to that of other pupils, but to a minimum standard or criterion. Statistics commonly used

with CRTs are pass/fail rates and percent of mastery or proficiency. Proficiency categories or levels, like those used in Wisconsin, reflect criterion-based decisions. Scores are set for each category, from minimal to advanced proficiency, and pupils are placed into these categories based on their performance on the tests.

Standardized tests are widely used for accountability purposes because they allow comparisons among pupils, schools, school districts, and states; are easy to administer and score; and are usually the most cost-effective type of test. However, they are frequently criticized as being culturally and/or economically biased and emphasizing less important factual knowledge and rote memorization skills rather than higher-order skills such as problem-solving, writing, and critical thinking. Another criticism is that the pressure to raise standardized test scores encourages schools to adjust their curricula to focus on test material, or "teach to the test," which results in narrowing the curriculum and further encouragement of memorization skills over more complex thought. Norm-referenced tests in particular have been criticized as providing misleading information if the original norm group's scores are dated. Critics of criterion-referenced tests dispute the use of standards, which they believe may be arbitrary, and the emphasis placed on passing the standard rather than performing as well as possible.

**Performance Assessments.** To address such criticisms of standardized tests and create assessments which are more authentic and valid, providing better information about the abilities of pupils, some states and school districts developed alternative assessments. These include various methods intended to measure not only knowledge of a particular subject, but also the use of complex reasoning and problem-solving skills. Also called performance-based or outcome-based assessments, performance assessments are designed to require pupils to demonstrate what they know and can do and to integrate interdisciplinary

knowledge into the accomplishment of a task. Tasks may include writing exercises, mathematics problems, science experiments, open-ended multiple-choice questions, or a combination. Performance assessments require pupils to produce an original answer, rather than select an answer.

Significant obstacles to the widespread implementation of performance assessments exist. Due to their complexity, performance assessments are more costly and less efficient to develop and score than standardized tests. "Multiple assessments," which are primarily multiple choice, but also combine true/false, short answer, and essay questions into one test, are also available from vendors. The combination of both standardized tests and performance assessments can provide more complete information on a pupil's education.

With the reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, also known as the No Child Left Behind Act) in 2001, all states were required to implement standardized tests based on each state's academic standards, and Wisconsin was required to make a number of changes to its state assessment program. In July, 2012, the state received approval for a flexibility waiver from the U.S. Education Department for certain provisions of the ESEA. As part of the waiver, the state was required to develop an alternative accountability system.

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### **Current Wisconsin Assessment Programs**

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A number of assessments are used in Wisconsin to demonstrate students' progress toward achieving the state academic standards in reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Beginning in the 2014-15 school year, public school districts and independent "2r" charter schools must administer the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) assess-

ment to pupils in four-year-old kindergarten through second grade to measure their reading readiness. Pupils attending a public school, an independent "2r" charter school, or a private school under a private school choice program in grades three through eight take assessments designed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and pupils in grades nine through 11 take assessments that are part of the ACT Suite. In addition, there are separate large-scale tests for students with significant cognitive disabilities, designed by the Dynamic Learning Maps Consortium, and for English language learners (Access for ELLs) to assess their language proficiency.

Public school districts, district-sponsored charter schools, independent "2r" charter schools, and private schools participating in the private school choice programs must adopt pupil academic standards and administer approved pupil assessments in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies in grades four and eight through 11, and all assessments in reading, mathematics, and science that are required under federal law. However, under state law, any pupil in grades four or eight through 11 may be excused from taking the tests upon the request of the pupil's parent or guardian. Private choice schools are only required to administer assessments to those pupils attending the school under a parental choice program.

Starting in 1998-99, a school board operating elementary grades may develop or adopt its own examination designed to measure pupil attainment of knowledge and concepts in 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. If a school board develops or adopts its own examination, then it is required to notify DPI. In addition, the board must provide the State Superintendent with statistical correlations of those examinations with the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade examinations adopted or approved by the State Superintendent and the federal Education Department must approve the examination. Starting in 2002-03, similar provisions were applied to inde-

pendent "2r" charter schools. (The "2r" designation is a reference to the statutory citation [s. 118.40(2r) of the statutes] for independent charter schools in Milwaukee and Racine.)

The following section describes current Wisconsin student assessment programs.

**Assessments of Reading Readiness.** Beginning in the 2012-13 school year, 2011 Act 166 required that all students in kindergarten be assessed for reading readiness, including phonemic awareness and letter sound knowledge. This requirement was expanded by 2013 Act 20, which required public schools, including charter schools, and independent "2r" charter schools, to annually assess students from four-year-old kindergarten until 1<sup>st</sup> grade beginning in the 2013-14 school year, and students from four-year-old kindergarten until 2<sup>nd</sup> grade beginning in 2014-15. Private schools participating in the private choice program are not required to administer PALS assessments. PALS assessments consist of untimed tasks administered to students individually or in small groups in the fall and spring of each year. Depending on the level and the individual student, the assessments may take approximately 20 to 40 minutes per student. PALS is designed to align with Common Core English and language arts standards.

Remedial reading services for pupils in kindergarten through grade four are required under state law if a pupil's reading readiness assessment indicates that the student is at risk of reading difficulty. State law specifies that interventions must be scientifically based, must address the specific areas in which the student is deficient, and must be consistent with state standards in reading and language arts.

**Wisconsin Third Grade Reading Requirement.** State law requires all public school districts and independent "2r" charter schools to annually administer a standardized reading test, developed by DPI, to third grade pupils. Wisconsin

public schools assessed third graders' reading comprehension each spring from 1989 to 2005 using the Wisconsin Reading Comprehension Test (called the Third Grade Reading Test from 1989 to 1995). From 2005-06 until 2013-14, third graders were assessed in reading and mathematics with the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examinations, part of the comprehensive state assessment systems also required by the ESEA/No Child Left Behind Act. Starting in 2014-15, the third grade reading requirement is met by the third grade Smarter Balanced English language arts/literacy assessment.

Remedial reading services for pupils in kindergarten through grade four are required under state law if: (a) a pupil fails to meet the district's reading objectives; or (b) a pupil fails to meet the minimum performance standard on the standardized state reading test and either the teacher and the pupil's parent or guardian agree that the test results accurately reflect the pupil's ability, or the teacher determines that based upon other objective evidence of the pupil's reading comprehension, the test results reflect the pupil's reading ability.

**Smarter Balanced Assessments.** In 1992-93, DPI was required under state law to make available to districts, at no charge, examinations designed to evaluate the level of knowledge attained by pupils in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades. District participation was voluntary in 1992-93 and required beginning in the 1993-94 school year. A third exam, for pupils in fourth grade, was added under 1995 Act 27. School district participation for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade exam was voluntary in 1995-96 and required beginning in the 1996-97 school year.

Beginning in 2005-06, the federal No Child Left Behind Act required all states to test all students in reading and mathematics in grades three through eight and once in high school (grade 10 under state law). From 2005-06 until 2013-14, the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exami-

nation -- Criterion Referenced Tests (WKCE-CRT) was administered to meet this requirement.

Beginning in the 2014-15 school year, Wisconsin students in grades three through eight will participate in the Smarter Balanced assessments in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. The knowledge and skills measured through the assessments are designed to correspond with the Common Core State Standards. The assessments are administered once each year in the spring and are taken using a computer. They consist of both computer adaptive testing, in which the computer program adjusts the difficulty of questions based on whether the student has answered previous questions correctly or incorrectly, and performance tasks, which are intended to capture students' depth of understanding, writing and research skills, and complex analysis skills. The Smarter Balanced assessments are designed to be untimed tests, but the estimated amount of time required for testing varies by grade and by subject area from three to four hours for each test. A testing window is typically provided to allow local flexibility in scheduling for make-up testing.

It is anticipated that science and social studies consortiums similar to the Smarter Balanced consortium will complete online, computer adaptive assessments for use in future years. Until those tests are available, schools will continue to administer the WKCE social studies and science assessments to students in grades four, eight, and ten.

Results of Smarter Balanced assessments will be reported by proficiency categories, or Achievement Level Descriptors. Separate results are reported for English language arts/literacy and mathematics. Students in grades four, eight, and ten will also receive science and social studies WKCE scores. Draft Smarter Balanced achievement levels are listed below.

- Level 4: The Level 4 student demon-



strates thorough understanding of and ability to apply the English language arts and literacy (mathematics) knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers, as specified in the Common Core State Standards.

- Level 3: The Level 3 student demonstrates adequate understanding of and ability to apply the English language arts and literacy (mathematics) knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers, as specified in the Common Core State Standards.

- Level 2: The Level 2 student demonstrates partial understanding of and ability to apply the English language arts and literacy (mathematics) knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers, as specified in the Common Core State Standards.

- Level 1: The Level 1 student demonstrates minimal understanding of and ability to apply the English language arts and literacy (mathematics) knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers, as specified in the Common Core State Standards.

Achievement levels are reported for all students who have been enrolled in the school or district for a full academic year, as well as for a partial year, regardless of disability or English-proficiency status. Under the Smarter Balanced achievement levels reporting, those pupils not tested are listed under the not tested category and are not included in proficiency level scoring.

**ACT Suite.** Starting in 2014-15, students in grades nine, 10, and 11 participate in assessments included in the ACT Suite. Students will take the ACT Aspire Early High School assessment in the fall and spring of their 9<sup>th</sup> grade year and the spring of their 10<sup>th</sup> grade year. The ACT Aspire assesses student readiness in English, mathematics, reading, science, and writing, and will be administered online. The ACT Aspire is designed to align with the Common Core State Standards.

The test includes both multiple choice and open-ended questions, and administration requires a total of four hours, 10 minutes.

Students in 11<sup>th</sup> grade will take the ACT Plus Writing and the ACT WorkKeys assessments in the spring. The ACT Plus Writing consists of four multiple-choice tests in English, mathematics, reading, and science, as well as a thirty-minute essay test. The ACT WorkKeys is a job skills assessment that measures foundational and soft skills. Both 11<sup>th</sup> grade assessments will be administered using paper copies in 2015, but may be administered online in the future.

**Alternative Assessments.** Under federal law, there are differing requirements for testing limited English-proficient pupils, depending on how long they have been enrolled in U.S. schools. These pupils are also tested for English language proficiency. Wisconsin schools use the ACCESS for ELLs assessment to measure English language proficiency in students from kindergarten to grade 12. The ACCESS assessment measures students' English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in five content areas: social and instructional language, English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. In 2015-16, a computer-based assessment called ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 will replace the paper-based version of the test.

The ESEA/No Child Left Behind Act requires that districts must include children with disabilities in the tests, with appropriate modifications where necessary or alternate assessments for those children who cannot meaningfully participate in the regular assessment. If a district excludes certain children with disabilities from the assessment, then a statement explaining why that assessment was not appropriate and how the pupil will be assessed through alternative means must be included in the pupil's individualized educational program. In addition, a statement must be included in a pupil's program indicating any

modifications that were made to the pupil's assessment. Students with severe limitations in cognitive functioning, in adaptive behavior, or in other academic functioning who are unable to participate in the Smarter Balanced or ACT assessments may take an alternative assessment developed by the Dynamic Learning Maps Consortium in grades three through 11.

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## Assessment Results and Uses

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Scores for the Smarter Balanced and ACT Suite assessments will not be available until after their first statewide administration in 2014-15. Wisconsin's statewide test results for the WKCE for 2013-14, the final statewide administration, are provided in Table 1. (Current and previous years' results for each school district are available on the DPI website: [wisedash.dpi.wi.gov].) The table shows results in each subject area of the 3<sup>rd</sup>

**Table 1: 2013-14 Statewide Knowledge and Concepts Exam Results  
(Percent of Pupils in each Proficiency Level)**

	Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Minimal	Not Tested	Student Count
<b>3rd Grade</b>						
Reading	6.9%	27.3%	34.4%	31.0%	0.5%	59,943
Mathematics	9.1	40.8	35.5	14.4	0.2	
<b>4th Grade</b>						
Reading	8.6	27.3	31.9	31.7	0.4	60,594
Mathematics	10.2	41.6	34.2	13.9	0.2	
Lang. Arts	31.9	44.6	17.3	5.9	0.4	
Science	23.4	52.7	18.4	5.2	0.3	
Social Studies	66.7	25.7	5.3	1.9	0.3	
<b>5th Grade</b>						
Reading	7.2	26.0	35.0	31.4	0.3	59,948
Mathematics	11.8	38.7	34.6	14.7	0.2	
<b>6th Grade</b>						
Reading	5.8	30.3	37.8	25.7	0.3	59,631
Mathematics	9.8	37.1	36.9	16.0	0.2	
<b>7th Grade</b>						
Reading	4.1	33.8	39.3	22.5	0.3	60,978
Mathematics	11.9	36.0	34.9	16.9	0.2	
<b>8th Grade</b>						
Reading	2.8	30.7	44.6	21.5	0.4	61,809
Mathematics	11.5	34.6	35.0	18.6	0.4	
Lang. Arts	26.1	37.3	22.3	13.8	0.6	
Science	33.4	46.9	11.8	7.4	0.5	
Social Studies	43.9	36.7	13.0	5.8	0.5	
<b>10th Grade</b>						
Reading	5.2	36.9	39.8	17.3	0.9	63,737
Mathematics	11.3	34.0	35.1	18.7	0.9	
Lang. Arts	18.1	52.9	21.1	6.6	1.3	
Science	39.9	33.3	10.2	15.4	1.2	
Social Studies	46.5	30.3	6.5	15.4	1.3	

through 8<sup>th</sup> grade and 10<sup>th</sup> grade tests. Results of the WKCE were reported by proficiency categories: Advanced (in-depth understanding of academic knowledge and skills tested on WKCE), Proficient (competency in the academic knowledge and skills tested), Basic (some academic knowledge and skills tested) Minimal Performance (very limited academic knowledge and skills tested). The statewide proficiency scores are reported for all students enrolled in public schools. The table shows, for each grade level tested and by each test area, the percentage of students enrolled in Wisconsin public schools that scored at each proficiency level, and the percentage of students that were not tested. Starting in 2012-13, Wisconsin increased the scores required for students to be considered proficient or advanced in reading or mathematics. The new score benchmarks more closely align with those of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). These higher standards result in a decrease in the number of students considered proficient or advanced in those subjects compared to prior years.

In the past, DPI also provided national percentile rankings for each content area and grade level. National percentile ranks indicate the relative standing of a student compared with other students in the same grade in the nationwide sample. Beginning in 2002-03, Wisconsin began using a combination of off-the-shelf national test items and customized test items to improve alignment between the knowledge and concepts examinations and the state's model academic standards. This change was required by the ESEA/No Child Left Behind Act. Customized items are not nationally normed, and therefore national percentile ranks are not available.

Under NCLB, schools are held accountable for achievement and progress in each subject area. Low achievement in reading, for example, is not offset by high achievement in mathematics. Prior law prohibited the use of results from assessments to evaluate teacher performance, until

the passage of 2009 Act 60. Under Act 60, school districts may use student examination scores to evaluate teachers if the school board has developed a teacher evaluation plan that includes all of the following: (a) a description of the evaluation process; (b) multiple criteria in addition to examination results; (c) the rationale for using examination results to evaluate teachers; and (d) an explanation of how the school board intends to use the evaluations to improve pupil academic achievement. Act 60 specified that the results of assessments could not be used to discharge, suspend, or formally discipline a teacher or as the reason for nonrenewal of a teacher's contract. In addition, the development of and any changes to such a teacher evaluation plan was a mandatory subject of collective bargaining.

The provision relating to teacher evaluation plans being a mandatory subject of collective bargaining was repealed under 2011 Act 10, which more generally made any factor or condition of employment, except base wages, a prohibited subject of collective bargaining for most public employees. Under 2011 Act 105, the results of examinations cannot be used as the sole reason to discharge, suspend or formally discipline a teacher or as the sole reason for the nonrenewal of a teacher's contract. Also under Act 105, a school board is authorized to use "value-added analyses" of scores on pupil assessments required under state or federal law to evaluate teachers, if the board has developed the required teacher evaluation plan.

Under state law, a district's scores may not be used to determine its general or categorical school aids. The tests are also required, to the extent possible, to be free from bias.

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## State Assessment Initiatives

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**Governor's Council on Model Academic Standards.** By executive order in January, 1997,

the Governor created the Governor's Council on Model Academic Standards. The Council consisted of the Lieutenant Governor who served as chair, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the chairs and ranking minority members of the Senate and Assembly Education Committees, and one public member appointed by the Governor.

As part of the 1997-99 budget (1997 Act 27), a Standards Development Council under the Office of the Governor was statutorily created that was nearly identical to the Governor's Council. Statutorily, the Council was required to review the Governor's proposed pupil academic standards in mathematics, science, reading and writing, geography, and history. After a series of public meetings, the Council's final recommendations on the standards were provided to the Governor in December, 1997. In January, 1998, the Governor approved the recommended standards and issued the standards as Executive Order 326. The Council is required to review the issued pupil academic standards periodically. If the Governor approves any subsequent modifications to the standards recommended by the Council, the changes can be issued as an executive order.

**4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Knowledge and Concepts Examinations.** Under 1999 Act 9, beginning with the 2002-03 school year, school districts were required to administer the state's 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, or 10<sup>th</sup> grade examination or develop and administer their own examinations to measure pupil attainment of knowledge and concepts in the respective grades.

Under Act 9, school boards and charter schools were required to devise written policies for promoting pupils from grade four to grade five and from grade eight to grade nine by September 1, 2002. The knowledge and concepts examination score, unless the pupil was excused from taking the exam by a parent or guardian, was one of several criteria to be used to make the promotion decision, including the pupil's aca-

ademic performance and teachers' recommendations, along with any other criteria the school board or charter school operator chooses. Beginning September 1, 2002, a school board or charter school operator cannot promote a 4<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade pupil unless the pupil satisfies the board's criteria for promotion.

**Common Core State Standards.** In June, 2010, the State Superintendent, citing his authority under Article X of the State Constitution, issued a proclamation adopting for Wisconsin the Common Core State Standards, academic benchmarks for curriculum, instruction, and assessment in English language arts and mathematics. The Common Core standards, which replace Wisconsin's prior model academic standards for those subjects, were developed under the auspices of the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association, in order to provide academic consistency and rigor within and across participating states. Adoption of the Common Core is voluntary for states. While 45 states initially adopted the standards, five states have since chosen to modify or repeal them as of the fall of 2014.

**Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium.** In September, 2010, the Department of Education awarded the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium a four-year \$160 million assessment grant from Race to the Top funds, established under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). Wisconsin is a governing member of the consortium, a group of states and territories collaborating to develop a new student assessment system that will be aligned with the Common Core. Twenty-two states were members of the consortium of the fall of 2014. The grant has funded the development costs of the new comprehensive assessment system, which is a computer adaptive test, consisting of multiple choice questions and performance tasks, designed to provide the summative tests required under the ESEA. Computer adaptive testing adjusts the difficulty level of questions based on prior answers,

to provide a more accurate measure of a pupil's knowledge. Smarter Balanced also provides optional benchmark tests, and helps guide classroom instruction with informal, continuous assessment.

Under the grant, the consortium had four years to develop a valid assessment, with full implementation required by 2014-15. Baseline testing for Smarter Balanced was conducted in 2013-14, as part of the federal grant to the consortium. While Smarter Balanced assessments will replace the English language arts, reading, and mathematics portions of the WKCE, separate science and social studies tests are needed to satisfy state requirements for testing in those subjects.

As part of DPI's 2013-15 agency budget request, the Department proposed implementing the Smarter Balanced assessments in grades three through eight, beginning in 2014-15. DPI also requested funding for the development of a replacement science and social studies assessment for grades four, eight, and ten. To satisfy the state and federal testing requirements in reading and mathematics in high school, DPI requested funding to administer the ACT Suite examinations to pupils in grades nine through 11, rather than using Smarter Balanced assessments in high school. These requests were approved by the Legislature and included in 2013 Act 20.

In addition, the previous assessment for students with disabilities, the WAA-SwD, was replaced by Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM), which was developed by another state consortium and was implemented statewide in 2014-15. The DLM assessment replaced the language arts, reading, and mathematics portions of the WAA-SwD. However, similar to the Smarter Balanced assessment, Dynamic Learning did not replace the science portion of the WAA-SwD. Currently, the social studies portion is locally administered and not funded by the state. A replacement for the WAA-SwD science assessment must be administered to meet state assessment requirements.

**Kindergarten Reading Assessment.** Under 2011 Act 166, an additional assessment of reading readiness is required for all pupils entering kindergarten. Beginning in 2012-13, each school board and independent "2r" charter school must use an assessment of literacy fundamentals selected by DPI to assess each pupil enrolled in kindergarten in the district or charter school each year. Under 2013 Act 20, this requirement was expanded to include four-year-old kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade students beginning in the 2013-14 school year, and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students beginning in 2014-15. The assessment must evaluate whether a pupil possesses phonemic awareness and letter sound knowledge. Results must be reported to each pupil's parent or guardian. If the assessment indicates that the pupil is at risk of reading difficulties, then the school must provide interventions or remedial reading services, which must be scientifically based, address all areas in which the pupil is deficient, and be consistent with state standards in reading and language arts.

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### **Federal Assessment Programs and Requirements**

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This section provides a discussion of a national assessment program and changes to federal law that directly affect pupil assessment in Wisconsin.

**National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).** The NAEP, commonly referred to as the Nation's Report Card, is intended to provide a continuous national survey of educational achievement and trends. The program is administered by the Commissioner of Educational Statistics, who heads the National Center for Education Statistics in the U.S. Education Department. The independent National Assessment Governing Board, appointed by the Secretary of Education, governs the program and is responsible for selection of subject area to be assessed, development

of assessment methodology, standards, testing procedures and reporting. Under NAEP, objective-referenced tests are administered periodically to representative, randomly selected national and state samples of 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade pupils in both public and private schools. Items included in the NAEP are fixed-response, machine-scorable, multiple-choice questions, and constructed-response questions. The federal government covers all costs associated with administering this exam.

Since 1969, assessments have been conducted periodically in reading, mathematics, writing, science, history/geography or other areas including music, art, computer competence, and civics. The NAEP has used the results to track changes in national student achievement levels over time and collect information on pupil performance by gender, race/ethnicity, and other variables intended to indicate the pupils' instructional experiences.

Table 2 provides the average scale scores for Wisconsin and the U.S. for each subject and year in which Wisconsin participated in the NAEP assessments.

**No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.** In 2001, Congress reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), renaming it the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Under the reauthorized legislation, schools receiving Title I funds are subject to extensive accountability provisions. NCLB requires that all students be tested in reading and mathematics each year in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades and once in high school, with science assessments once each in elementary, middle, and high school. States select and design their own assessments, but the tests must be aligned with the state's academic standards.

As a condition of receiving federal education funding, a sample of 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in each state must participate in NAEP in reading and mathematics every other year to provide a point

**Table 2: NAEP Average Scale Scores**

Subject	Grade	Year	Scale Score		
			Wisconsin Average	National Average	
Mathematics (scale: 0-500)	4	1992	229	219	
		1996	231	222	
		2003	237	234	
		2005	241	237	
		2007	244	239	
		2009	244	239	
		2011	245	240	
	2013	245	241		
	8	1990	274	262	
		1992	278	267	
		1996	283	271	
		2003	284	276	
		2005	285	278	
		2007	286	280	
		2009	288	282	
		2011	289	283	
		2013	289	284	
		Reading (scale: 0-500)	4	1992	224
1994				224	212
1998	222			213	
2003	221			216	
2005	221			217	
2007	223			220	
2009	220			220	
2011	221		220		
2013	221		221		
8	1998		265	261	
	2003		266	261	
	2005		266	260	
	2007		264	261	
	2009		266	262	
	2011		267	264	
	2013	268	266		
	Science (scale: 0-300)	4	2005	158	149
2009			157	149	
8		1996	160	148	
		2005	158	147	
	2009	157	149		
Writing (scale: 0-300)	8	1998	153	148	
		2007	158	154	

of comparison of the state's results on its own tests. Previously, participation in NAEP was voluntary for states. In addition, under NCLB, NAEP must conduct a national assessment, and may conduct a state assessment, in reading and mathematics in 12<sup>th</sup> grade at least once every four years.

Additionally, under NCLB states were required to report the performance of schools and districts in making "adequate yearly progress" (AYP), as defined under Title I and measured by pupil assessments. NCLB required that AYP be reported by gender, race or ethnicity, English proficiency status, by students with disabilities compared to non-disabled students, and by economically disadvantaged students compared to those not economically disadvantaged. States were required to reach 100% academic proficiency, as defined by each state, for each subgroup of students within 12 years. States were required to raise the level of proficiency gradually, but in equal increments over time, as compared to a minimum performance threshold based on the lowest-achieving schools or student subgroups in the 2001-02 school year. At least 95% of each subgroup were required to participate in the assessments in order for the school to make AYP. NCLB required 50% of ELL pupils meet prescribed progress measures toward English proficiency each year. Under NCLB, districts receiving Title I funds were required to identify and sanction schools that consistently fail to make AYP for any subgroup.

If a school failed to make AYP for two consecutive years, then it was identified for improvement. The school district and DPI were required to provide technical assistance to the school and transportation for students who choose to attend other district schools until the school is no longer identified for improvement. In providing such an option, priority must be given to the lowest achieving students from low-income families. The district was required to use at least 5% of its Title I funds to pay for that op-

tion.

After a third year of failure to make AYP, the district was also required to make tutoring and other supplemental educational services available to low-income students still enrolled in the school identified for improvement. The district was required to use at least five percent of its Title I funds to pay for that option. Unless a smaller amount was needed to satisfy all requests, up to 20% of a district's Title I funds were required to be spent on either or both of these options.

After a fourth year of failure to make AYP, the district was required to implement corrective actions such as replacing school staff, implementing a new curriculum, providing professional development, or otherwise restructuring the school to enable it to make AYP. After a full year of corrective action and continued failure to make AYP, the district was required to implement major restructuring of the school, including reopening as a public charter school, contracting with a different entity to operate the school, or turning operation over to the state.

Requirements related to school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring were to end if the school made AYP for two consecutive school years. AYP was also calculated on a district-wide basis, as Title I implements similar oversight requirements for states over districts as a whole.

In 2013-14, approximately 1,200 schools in 419 districts and 23 independent "2r" charter schools in Wisconsin will receive Title I funding totaling approximately \$204.3 million. Statewide, increasing numbers of schools and districts failed to make AYP as required levels of proficiency increased between 2002-03 and 2011-12. Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) has been a 'district identified for improvement' under federal law since 2006, and MPS began to restructure the district around school improvement during the 2007-08 school year. The district is currently responsible for implementing a district improve-

**Table 3: Previous NCLB Annual Objectives for the Percent of Wisconsin Students Who Need to Score at Proficient/Advanced**

		Reading	Math
Starting Point	2001-02	61%	37%
	2002-03	61	37
	2003-04	61	37
Intermediate Goal (Begin new 3-8 tests)	2004-05	67.5	47.5
	2005-06	67.5	47.5
	2006-07	67.5	47.5
Intermediate Goal	2007-08	74	58
	2008-09	74	58
	2009-10	74	58
Intermediate Goal	2010-11	80.5	68.5
Intermediate Goal	2011-12	87	79
Intermediate Goal	2012-13	93.5	89.5
Goal: All Proficient	2013-14	100	100

ment plan monitored by DPI.

Table 3 lists the starting points and intermediate goals of Wisconsin's state accountability plan submitted to the federal Education Department, as required under NCLB.

**ESEA Flexibility Waiver.** No reauthorization of the ESEA, normally due every five years, has been passed since the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. In light of that, in 2011 the administration and the Education Department announced that state educational agencies would be invited to request flexibility under the ESEA, as allowed under current provisions of the federal law that had been little utilized previously. Regulatory flexibility would be offered in exchange for comprehensive state plans for education reforms, including more rigorous academic standards and teacher improvement initiatives. Forty-five states, including Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia requested flexibility waivers. In July, 2012, the federal Education Department ap-

proved Wisconsin's request for a waiver from certain provisions of No Child Left Behind. As of the fall of 2014, the Education Department had approved flexibility waivers for a total of 43 states and D.C.

Wisconsin's ESEA flexibility waiver allows the state to use different metrics for measuring student and school performance, in lieu of the AYP system implemented under No Child Left Behind. Schools will be required to meet a different set of annual measurable objectives than those that would have applied under NCLB, and will be measured against an index score that incorporates more indicators of performance. The Education Department required that states applying for flexibility waivers address: (a) college- and career-readiness expectations for students; (b) state-developed differentiated recognition, accountability, and support; (c) support for effective teachers and principals; and (d) reduced duplication and unnecessary burden.

As part of these goals under the waiver, a number of changes in the state's assessment and accountability program have occurred. DPI initially raised cut scores on the current WKCE-CRT for reading and mathematics to align with the cut scores used on NAEP, in order to reflect higher expectations during the two-year transition between the WKCE and the new Smarter Balanced Assessments. The adoption of Common Core standards represents another initiative designed to raise college- and career-readiness expectations for students. Schools will no longer be required to use Title I funding to make supplemental education services available. Revised "school report cards," developed as part of the ESEA waiver application using the new reading and mathematics cut scores and other measures, were made available for every school in the state beginning in the 2012-13 school year.

The report cards provide each school's score on a new "accountability index," which takes into account present student achievement levels in



reading and mathematics and student growth over time, in addition to graduation rates, student engagement, attendance rates, and test participation. The index also includes indicators of progress toward closing "achievement gaps," the persistent disparities in test performance and graduation rates among certain subgroups of the student population, including nonwhite racial/ethnic groups, students who are economically disadvantaged, English learners, and students with disabilities. The minimum cell size for reporting on these subgroups is 20. All schools or districts that have at least 20 students in a target subgroup receive a score based on the improvement over time for that subgroup compared to the state comparison subgroup (students who are white,

non-economically disadvantaged, English proficient, or without disabilities). The new report cards provide an index score from 0 to 100, and classify schools within one of the following categories: (a) significantly exceeds expectations; (b) exceeds expectations; (c) meets expectations; (d) meets few expectations; or (e) fails to meet expectations. Data on the new annual measurable objectives -- the percentage of students achieving proficiency in reading and mathematics -- are reported alongside the index score. Those measurable objectives are shown in Table 4.

Under the waiver, special corrective actions will continue to apply to Milwaukee Public Schools at the district and school level, given the

**Table 4a: ESEA Flexibility Waiver Annual Measurable Objectives for Reading Proficiency**

Student Group	Annual Increase	Baseline 2010-11	Annual Objectives for Reading					
			2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
All Students	2.4%	35.5%	37.9%	40.3%	42.7%	45.1%	47.5%	49.9%
American Indian	4.7	22.1	26.8	31.5	36.2	40.9	45.6	50.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.3	30.2	33.5	36.8	40.1	43.4	46.7	50.0
Black not Hispanic	6.2	12.6	18.8	25.0	31.2	37.4	43.6	49.8
Hispanic	5.5	17.0	22.5	28.0	33.5	39.0	44.5	50.0
White not Hispanic	1.4	41.6	43.0	44.4	45.8	47.2	48.6	50.0
Students w. Disabilities	6.0	13.8	19.8	25.8	31.8	37.8	43.8	49.8
Economically Disadvantaged	5.0	19.8	24.8	29.8	34.8	39.8	44.8	49.8
English Language Learners	6.7	9.6	16.3	23.0	29.7	36.4	43.1	49.8

**Table 4b: ESEA Flexibility Waiver Annual Measurable Objectives for Mathematics Proficiency**

Student Group	Annual Increase	Baseline 2010-11	Annual Objectives for Mathematics					
			2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
All Students	3.1%	46.7%	49.8%	52.9%	56.0%	59.1%	62.2%	65.3%
American Indian	5.9	29.7	35.6	41.5	47.4	53.3	59.2	65.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.8	48.4	51.2	54.0	56.8	59.6	62.4	65.2
Black not Hispanic	8.0	17.4	25.4	33.4	41.4	49.4	57.4	65.4
Hispanic	6.3	27.3	33.6	39.9	46.2	52.5	58.8	65.1
White not Hispanic	2.0	53.5	55.5	57.5	59.5	61.5	63.5	65.5
Students w. Disabilities	7.4	20.8	28.2	35.6	43.0	50.4	57.8	65.2
Economically Disadvantaged	6.0	29.4	35.4	41.4	47.4	53.4	59.4	65.4
English Language Learners	6.9	24.0	30.9	37.8	44.7	51.6	58.5	65.4

district's long-term under-performance on pupil assessments and its status under the ESEA as a "district in need of improvement" since 2006. A large majority of the state's lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools, also known as "priority" Title I schools, are located within MPS, which under the waiver must be identified and must implement interventions.

Under 2009 Act 215, a series of corrective actions are authorized if the State Superintendent determines that a school district has been in need of improvement for four consecutive years. Corrective action requirements, similar to those already required under Act 215 for MPS, are also specified under the ESEA flexibility waiver, including: (a) a requirement that all staff be highly qualified and equitably distributed amongst the district's schools; (b) implementation of a single district-wide comprehensive literacy and mathematics plan in all schools; (c) implementation of differentiated student instruction (Response to Intervention) in all schools; and (d) prioritizing pupil support services staffing and implementing positive behavioral intervention and supports (PBIS) within priority schools. The State Superintendent has established a committee on district and school improvement to oversee the implementation of these and other changes in MPS, including extended learning time and improved parent engagement, through 2015-16.

"Priority" and "focus" Title I schools, within or outside MPS, which underperform or have large achievement gaps will also be required to implement similar corrective actions or interventions under the ESEA waiver, with technical assistance from DPI. All priority schools will also be required to add 300 hours of instruction for all students, through extended school day, extended school year, or other alternative scheduling. According to DPI's application to the federal Education Department, after four years of these interventions, if a school has not demonstrated adequate improvement, the State Superintendent

could choose to utilize his authority under Act 215 to implement further changes in the school. Priority schools will be identified every four years, and a school may exit priority status once the school: (a) no longer satisfies initial criteria for identification; (b) meets its annual measurable objectives for two consecutive years or is on a trajectory to meet its objectives by the end of 2015-16; and (c) demonstrates successful implementation of school improvement strategies for two consecutive years.

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### **Funding for Pupil Assessment**

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Pupil assessment costs are significant. Although development of the Smarter Balanced assessment was funded by a Race to the Top grant, implementation costs to administer and score the tests are now borne by the state. In addition, Wisconsin is now funding reading assessments for students in four-year-old kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and ACT Suite assessments for students in 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grades.

Table 5 provides a breakdown of total funding provided to DPI for pupil assessment programs from 2011-12 to 2014-15. The table identifies costs in three areas:

1. Printing, scoring, and reporting costs. This includes payments to Smarter Balanced and other vendors for the tests. The Smarter Balanced consortium does not provide scoring services, so another vendor will be required for scoring the assessments.
2. Development. This includes base costs for continual evaluation of standards alignment, scoring, and bias for the assessments.
3. Program operations costs. In 2014-15, the Office of Educational Accountability within DPI consists of 16.3 authorized positions, which

are directly responsible for assessment-related activities. Federal funds support 11.3 of these positions.

4. Supplies and services costs. The supplies and services budget includes items such as data processing, printing, travel, space rental, postage, conferences, and consultant expenses.

**Table 5: Estimated Expenditures for DPI Pupil Assessment Programs**

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15*	
Printing, Scoring, and Reporting	\$2,538,500	\$2,379,800	\$6,278,100	\$12,087,900	GPR
	3,905,700	5,062,300	4,233,700	3,188,800	FED
Development	401,100	1,112,700	1,118,100	1,045,500	GPR
	284,200	292,900	241,100	2,325,000	FED
Program Operations	237,800	197,700	215,100	220,000	GPR
	1,094,300	1,146,600	1,351,400	2,173,600	FED
Supplies and Services	45,900	33,300	46,300	1,235,100	GPR
	2,349,400	1,988,200	628,700	2,634,600	FED
Total	3,223,300	3,723,500	7,657,600	14,588,500	GPR
	<u>7,633,600</u>	<u>8,490,000</u>	<u>6,454,900</u>	<u>10,322,000</u>	FED
	\$10,856,900	\$12,213,500	\$14,112,500	\$24,910,500	
Positions (FTE)	3.0	3.0	5.0	5.0	GPR
	<u>11.3</u>	<u>11.3</u>	<u>11.3</u>	<u>11.3</u>	FED
Total	14.3	14.3	16.3	16.3	

\*2014-15 figures are budgeted. All other years are actual.  
Does not include separate appropriation for PALS assessment.