

Reading Introduction – February 2010

OSPI has developed reading assessments for grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and high school. Beginning in the 2009-10 school year, two new tests--grades 3-8 Measurements of Student Progress (MSP) and the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) replace the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL).

To support target-related instruction and improve student performance on the statewide assessments Northwest Educational Service District 189 formed a Classroom-Based Assessment Cooperative and organized the development of 32 grade-level reading assessments for use in the classroom at grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. In addition, the Cooperative has recently developed 12 “mini-assessments” targeting critical specific reading skills at grades 5, 6, 7, and 8.

Each of the original 32 reading assessments at these grade levels includes:

- One or more literary and/or informational passages
- A Student Packet with multiple-choice, short-answer, and extended-response questions using question stems provided by OSPI
- A Teacher’s Guide with sample responses and suggested scoring
- A Summary Grid that reports the scope of the assessment (number of points, targets, types of questions, etc.)
- Annotated Student Sample Responses
- Unscored Student Sample Responses for some assessments

Each of the 12 “mini-assessments” includes:

- One or more literary and/or informational passages
- Laser focus on a targeted reading skill
- A Student Packet with a total of 10 multiple-choice, completion, and short-answer questions using question stems provided by OSPI
- A Teacher’s Guide with sample responses and scoring suggestions
- Focus on assessing one of the following skills with each assessment: making inferences/predictions, comparing/contrasting, and making connections (cause and effect)

The difference between assessments at different grade levels is the length and reading level of the reading selections. The average readability of each assessment will be approximately the same as for the state assessment at that grade level, but the number of items or points will be reduced. However, some passages may be longer and more like everyday reading and classroom reading assignments. All of the documents listed above may be accessed on Northwest Educational State District 189’s website with a password provided to members of the CBA Cooperative.

Reading selections were reviewed for fairness and bias by both teachers and an independent reviewer. Assessment questions were drafted by teachers and then revised by a literacy consultant with knowledge and experience in developing grade-level reading assessments. Each assessment was also subjected to an independent review. The order in which the assessments appear at each grade level indicates its difficulty as determined by those who created them. In addition, descriptors--fall, 1st mid-year, 2nd mid-year, and spring--appear on each summary grid to help teachers decide when to administer each assessment. Overall summary grids for both elementary and secondary assessments provide an overview of the number of items or points for

targets and strands. Finally, there are student sample responses to assist with scoring the short-answer and extended-response items.

As classroom-based assessments (CBAs), these assessments are intended to be more *formative* than *summative*. In other words, they are intended primarily to support and guide classroom instruction rather than to make a final or comprehensive evaluation of student progress. Teachers may use student responses and assessment data to plan lessons and classroom activities and to teach students useful reading skills and strategies. To achieve the most reliable data from these assessments, teachers should allow ample time for students to complete the assessments. Finally, it is also suggested that teachers should encourage students to reflect on their performance, using the procedure outlined on the summary grids provided. Based on their reflections, students can set learning goals for themselves. Teachers can then support students in reaching their goals by administering all four grade-level assessments during the year, by providing instructional support for targeted skills and strands on an ongoing basis, and by encouraging classroom discussion of questions, responses, and scoring. Finally, students in grades 5-8 will benefit from feedback about their performance on the mini-CBAs recently posted to the NWESD Co-op website. These mini-CBAs target isolated skills assessed by the state, including inferences and predictions, comparing/contrasting, and cause and effect. Teachers should administer the mini-CBAs only after intentional instruction focusing on these skills.

It is helpful for teachers to form groups to:

- Discuss the match between the assessment and the learning targets being addressed in the classroom.
- Discuss the concerns teachers have about using the assessment with their students and appropriate adjustments.
- Complete the assessment as a group and discuss their experiences working through the tasks.
- Come together after administering the assessment to collaboratively score and discuss the results of the assessment.
- Discuss instructional strategies that respond to results of the assessment.

As teachers developing tasks on their own, it is important to mirror the experience students will have on the state assessments. Factors such as format, length of passage, level of difficulty, and inclusion of both informational and literary passages are important considerations.

In keeping with best practice in the use of classroom-based assessments, we recommend that teachers read and complete the assessments prior to having students complete them. Teachers need to determine the appropriateness of the assessment for their classroom and their district.