

Improving Test Participation and Administration



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Overview

The goal of testing at least 95 percent of enrolled students is designed to assure that the maximum number of students are being assessed. NCLB does not require 100 percent test participation in recognition of factors such as medical emergencies or prolonged illness. Schools may have to develop a more flexible schedule to ensure that all students have an opportunity to participate in the statewide assessments. For example, administering tests early in the test window allows time for adequate make-up sessions. The way in which statewide tests are administered locally can have a dramatic effect on student participation.

For a complete perspective on AYP, along with additional contacts and the entire AYP Handbook, visit: http://dpi.wi.gov/ssos/ayp_handbook.html.

Beginning with the 2005-06 school year, the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) requires all states to test all students in reading and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school (grade 10 under s.118.30, Wis. Stats.). These criterion-referenced tests are referred to as the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE). Student performance on these assessments is reported in proficiency categories and used to determine the adequate yearly progress of students at the school, district, and state levels.

Action Options for Test Participation

Communicate the importance of testing to parents

Parents need to understand the importance of test participation and the implications of nonparticipation for their child and his or her school. In parent meetings, orientations, or resource materials, school staff should emphasize the critical role testing now plays under NCLB. Include testing dates on school calendars and newsletters. Send postcards or emails to parents reminding them of the testing dates as they approach.

Develop a plan for testing students not in the school building during test sessions

You are responsible, under NCLB, for testing all students enrolled in your school or district during the testing window. This includes enrolled students who are receiving instruction at home, incarcerated students, or students in day treatment. These students are still counted in the calculation for test participation. In some cases school staff may need to locate students and take the test to them. Before the testing window, develop a plan to ensure that test security is preserved. Allowing test booklets to leave the school building may result in their being lost, stolen, or mishandled. If a student must be tested outside of the school, be sure that the person administering the test is a licensed professional staff member. All passages, stimuli, and questions in the test are confidential and must be kept secure at all times. Unauthorized use, duplication, or reproduction of any and all portions of the test material is prohibited.

Use existing school structures to communicate the importance of test participation to students

Many schools have advisor/advisee or mentoring programs to build positive relationships and support students. Adults in this leadership role can work with their assigned students to help them understand the importance of participating in the test. Likewise, staff who implement after-school tutoring or enrichment programs can talk with students about the importance of taking the test and teach test-taking skills.

Use existing community resources to communicate the importance of test participation

Identify the community-based organizations that your students utilize. Take time to meet with staff in those organizations and familiarize them with the requirements of NCLB. Ask for their support and involvement in encouraging students to participate in the test.

Avoid missing AYP in test participation due to unnecessary demographic data errors

School staff in charge of packaging test booklets and rechecking test demographic data that the school receives on testing labels need to be very clear about what they should be checking. Lack of accuracy in how students are classified or how test booklets are handled has resulted in schools unnecessarily being identified as missing AYP. Staff in charge of test data should do the following:

- Consult with your school and district coordinators who work with the Wisconsin Student Locator System (WSLS) and the Individual Student Enrollment System (ISES) to ensure that all student enrollment and demographic data are current. These are the databases from which information used to generate bar-coded testing labels, as well as demographic data used for scoring, are drawn. The WSLS is open year round. ISES collections are currently open from July through October to collect information on set count dates in the Fall and for the end of the previous school year.
- Schools and districts are held accountable for the reading and mathematics performance, test participation, attendance, and graduation of their students, be certain your school has updated ISES enrollment records to formally transfer or withdraw students who have left the school in time for the ISES collections.
- Check for any students who missed test participation due to a significant medical emergency. A significant medical emergency is a significant health impairment that renders the student incapable of participating in any academic activities, including state assessments, for the entire testing window.
- If a school or district does not meet the 95 percent test participation rate solely due to a significant medical emergency it can request to be exempted from the test participation calculation through the AYP reconsideration process. Districts will need written documentation from a physician of the medical emergency, including evidence that the condition has prevented the student from participating in any academic activities, including testing, for the entire testing window. Examples might include hospitalization for a life-threatening condition or a serious accident involving extensive rehabilitation. General hospitalization or homebound status are not considered extreme medical conditions.
- If students enrolled in your school/district move prior to beginning any portion of the test, forward their testing label and book to their new district if the student moves within Wisconsin. If the student moves out of state or to a non-public school, destroy their testing label.
- Remember that a test document (WKCE test book or WAA-SwD answer document) with a testing label or "bubbled" student information must be returned for all students who are enrolled at the time of testing, even if they are not tested. When returning blank test documents with labels or bubbled information for students who were not tested, however, double-check the status of that student to be certain that s/he is still enrolled in that grade level, and that demographic data such as ethnicity or economically disadvantaged status is accurate.
- Plan for, and pay careful attention to, preliminary testing data from the testing contractor through the online Record Editing System (RES) following testing the previous fall. In RES, be sure to check *each* student's record very carefully, paying particular attention to their testing status, full academic year status, and demographic information. RES is your *final opportunity* to verify accuracy of the demographic information and to make corrections in the coding that generates test reports, WINSS data, and AYP calculations.



- A student is considered to have made a valid attempt if s/he has answered any questions on the test; students do not have to answer all or even a majority of test questions in order to be considered a test participant. When a test is invalidated, the student does not count as a participant.

Action Options for Test Administration

Broaden the time frame for local test administration

Testing may take place throughout the entire testing window. Instead of setting just one week for makeup testing, staff should be ready to test students whenever they can. When students return from an absence, make arrangements to make up reading and mathematics tests first.



Create supportive testing environments

Consider administering tests with students in small groups and with school staff present to proctor. Changes to school schedules may be made in order to break up test times into smaller blocks. Some schools test students off-site in conference centers or hotels to create an environment with no distractions.

Make appropriate testing accommodations

See <http://dpi.wi.gov/oea/pdf/assessmatrix07.pdf> for the Accommodations Guidelines for all students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners. Consider the accommodations that the child receives in the classroom as possible accommodations for the WKCE. Select accommodations that do not invalidate the test, i.e., do not change the skills or content tested. For example, an accommodation that includes reading passages or items aloud to students would not be an acceptable accommodation if the purpose of the assessment is to measure reading skills. All accommodations on the WKCE must be documented on the student's IEP before testing.

Share test-taking strategies that work

An effective teacher and a strong instructional program provide students with the knowledge they need to do well on tests. However, a lack of test-taking skills can prevent students from showing what they really know. Students who have the academic knowledge sometimes perform poorly simply because they are unfamiliar with a type of question, are unfamiliar with test-taking strategies, or do not have an opportunity to practice sample test items. Test anxiety can be reduced by not overemphasizing the importance of the test and reducing the time spent on test prep activities. Using WKCE released items during the course of regular instruction provides students with opportunities to become familiar with the format of the test. WKCE Practice Items, Released Items and Sample Items for reading and mathematics can be found at: <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/oea/wkce.html>.

Resources for Improving Test Participation and Administration

Web Sites

The National Assessment of Educational Progress produces data for the nation and also for all states and some urban school districts in a number of different subject areas, for many demographic groups, and for combinations of these demographic factors.

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>

WKCE Assessment Frameworks in Reading and Mathematics specify what will be assessed for each grade in each subskill.

<http://dpi.wi.gov/oea/wkce.html>

Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation provides education professionals access to referred articles that can have a positive impact on assessment, research, evaluation, and teaching practice, especially at the local educational agency (LEA) level.

<http://pareonline.net/>

Helpful information for parents to help their child with test-taking skills and understand the benefits of testing.

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/TestTaking/index.html>

6 + 1 Trait Writing can help students learn and use a common language to refer to characteristics of writing as well as create a common vision of what good writing looks like. Teachers and students can use the 6 + 1 Trait model to pinpoint areas of strength and weakness as they continue to focus on improved writing.

<http://www.nwrel.org/assessment/department.php?d=1>

Great Schools is an objective source of school information on elementary, middle, and high schools.

<http://www.greatschools.net/>

Study tips and test-taking strategies from a variety of universities.

<http://www.eop.mu.edu/study/>

Data Quality

WSLS/ISES used for Pre-ID Labels	http://www.dpi.wi.gov/oea/wsasdata_attnt.html
Opportunities to verify accuracy of student data	http://www.dpi.wi.gov/oea/wsaskcchck.html
ISES Phase II Dates	http://www.dpi.wi.gov/lbstat/isesdates.html
WSAS - Record Editing System (RES) Training 2008	http://www.dpi.wi.gov/oea/webcasts.html
Critical AYP Data Elements in RES	http://www.dpi.wi.gov/oea/doc/wsasresaypdata.doc
Check the Lowest Grade in your School	http://www.dpi.wi.gov/oea/xls/lowestgrade0108.xls

During the test administration, some students will be moving into the school districts in Wisconsin from different school districts in Wisconsin, out of state schools or from private schools. Some students will be moving from a Wisconsin school district to out of state school or to a private school in Wisconsin. The Office of Educational Accountability developed a descriptive table in an effort to answer the questions regarding the standard protocols that should be followed by both the districts from and to which the student moves during the testing window. This also provides the information on which district is accountable for the student during such situations. Standard protocol table is available at <http://dpi.wi.gov/oea/pdf/07stdmov.pdf>.