

News Release Everett Public Schools



Everett Public Schools

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For more information:

Terry Edwards, 425-385-4050

Ric Williams, 425-385-4055

Mary Waggoner, 425-385-4049

Everett Public Schools' [student test scores outpace state](#)

Percent of students meeting standard has topped the state average in reading, writing, math and science at every grade level tested for three out of the last four years.

On Aug. 31, State Superintendent Randy Dorn released state test score information every school district in the state was eagerly anticipating. The spring 2010 tests were not the familiar *Washington Assessment of Student Learning* (WASL) tests, and the 2010 testing conditions had also changed. Educators around the state speculated how the changes would impact student scores.

For Everett, the test changes may have created some questions about some of the test results, but overall, the district pattern of outpacing the state average continued. The percent of Everett Public Schools students meeting standard on the [2010 test topped the state average in reading, writing, math and science](#) at every grade level tested. This has been the district trend on state test scores for three out of the last four years. In 2009, the percentage of Everett students meeting standard at one grade level in one subject dipped below the state average.

In his message to staff, Superintendent Gary Cohn lauded staff for commitment and focus reflected in the test scores.

"Congratulations for the work exemplified by the release of this information! This news gives us much to celebrate now and much around which to frame our work for this year.

- 1. Once again, at every grade level tested and in every subject area tested, our students performed above the state average. Our middle school scores, compared to state middle school scores, are exceptionally impressive. In some subjects, middle school scores increased over last year at percentages three to ten times greater than the state's increases in those areas.*
- 2. This year, elementary special education students achieved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards in each of our 17 elementary schools – a dramatic change over previous years.*
- 3. More of our students in more subcategories, including special education, are meeting AYP standards each year."*

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This year's tests and how they were administered create new benchmarks

The *Measurements of Student Progress* (MSP), for elementary students, and the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE), for middle and high school students, are different tests from the WASL given in Washington state schools since the mid-1990s. In some subjects, the 2010 tests measured new academic standards. The time students were allowed to complete tests in 2010 was shortened from two days to one day, but the number of items students were required to complete was not shortened proportionately. These differences in the tests and the testing conditions have, in many ways, created new benchmarks for school districts around the state. As Cohn noted, "Instead of many years of WASL trend data to use as a benchmark, this year we have the new MSP and HSPE baseline data to begin using to measure our students' learning in the coming years."

Fewer AYP "cells" shows more diverse students are meeting test standards

The MSP and HSPE tests are used to calculate whether individual schools and the district have met *Adequate Yearly Progress* (AYP). AYP is determined by the federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation which mandates that all schools and all school districts will reach a certain percentage of students passing the state's reading and math tests each year. Ultimately, 100 percent of students in all tested subjects and grade levels at all schools nationwide are expected to be at standard by 2014.

A Title I school receiving federal funding moves into AYP "needs improvement" status with sanctions after it misses its AYP goals for two consecutive years in the same subject – reading or math. A district moves into "needs improvement" status when it misses making AYP for two consecutive years in all three grade spans (elementary, middle and high school) in any subgroup or category in the same subject area. Schools must meet standard in 37 different subgroups and categories, and districts in 111. These categories and groups are arranged in a grid with individual "cells" representing different subgroups. Schools and the district must meet these achievement targets in every "cell" to make AYP. There are 37 ways for a school to miss AYP and 111 ways for a district to do so. To exit this "improvement" status and the sanctions that come with it (for Title I schools), a school or a district must meet achievement targets in every category for two consecutive years.

Cohn acknowledged that, like the vast majority of large school districts in the state, Everett Public Schools has some schools not achieving AYP. He also points out, "There is also no question that every school in the district is focused on student achievement. We can see the results of that work in the last three years of AYP data as reported by OSPI.

"In 2007-08, the district achieved AYP in **76.7%** of the 111 categories.

In 2008-09, the district achieved AYP in **80.8%** of the 111 categories.

In 2009-10, the district achieved AYP in **92.2%** of the 111 categories.

"In 2007-08, we were not required to meet AYP in 38 categories because the number of students in those categories was too few to be considered a reliable sample.

"In 2009-10, the number of categories considered as having too few students dropped to 34, and yet the number and percentage of categories in which we achieved AYP jumped to 71 and to 92.2%.

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“We can conclude from this information that we are achieving AYP for more diverse categories while we are also being held accountable for the performance of more students in diverse categories.”

For Everett Public Schools, deep analysis of test scores begins this week, even before school starts. Individual schools have test score information for each student, Cohn says. “Staff will use this data to determine areas needing instructional improvement and strategies to help each student meet standard. Everett Public Schools staff have a pervasive attitude and strategic focus on student success. We could not wait to get our hands on this data which will help refine how to continually improve how we help students succeed. We have also been planning for weeks how best to use work days before school starts to collaborate on ways to target the year’s work for each school and the district. It is imperative that educational staff have regular time together to discuss and collaborate about best practices for their instruction and their students’ learning.”

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