

# WA-AIM 1% Participation Cap

Leslie Huff, Ph.D. Secondary Education and Pathways Preparation



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A background image showing a group of young children in a classroom. In the foreground, a young girl with dark skin and braided hair, wearing a bright yellow long-sleeved shirt, has her arms raised high with her palms facing forward. She has a joyful expression. Behind her, another child with light skin and long brown hair is also visible, looking towards the camera. The image is partially covered by a semi-transparent teal overlay on the left side where the text is located.

## Vision

*All students prepared for post-secondary pathways, careers, and civic engagement.*

## Mission

Transform K–12 education to a system that is centered on **closing opportunity gaps and is characterized by high expectations for all students and educators**. We achieve this by developing equity-based policies and supports that empower educators, families, and communities.

## Values

- Ensuring Equity
- Collaboration and Service
- Achieving Excellence through Continuous Improvement
- Focus on the Whole Child



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# Equity Statement

Each student, family, and community possesses strengths and cultural knowledge that benefits their peers, educators, and schools.

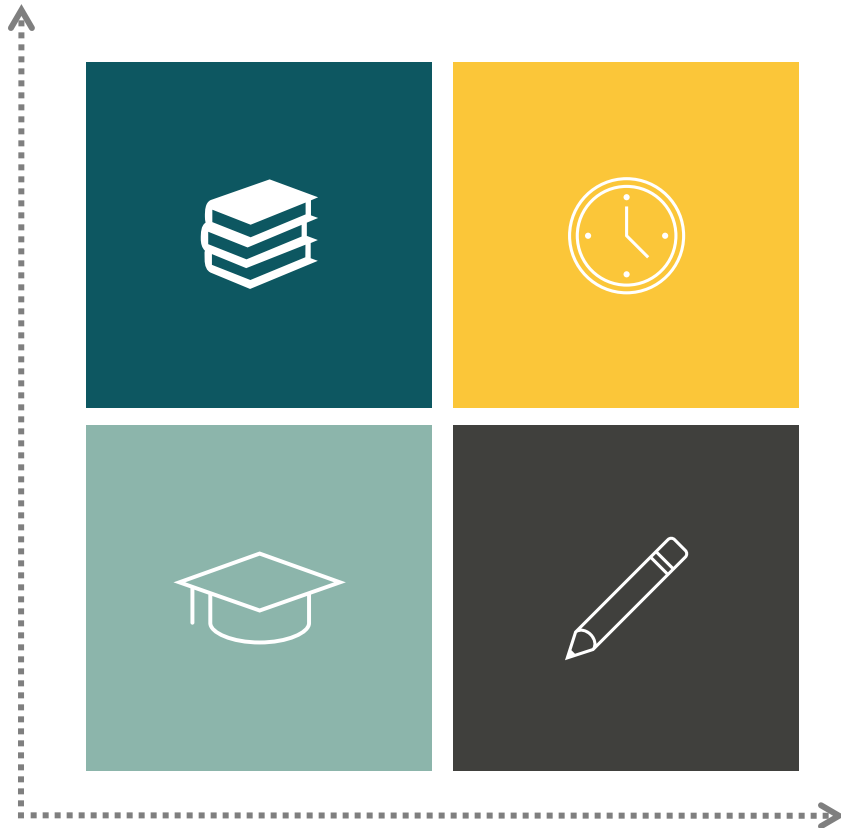
Ensuring educational equity:

- Goes beyond equality; **it requires education leaders to examine the ways current policies and practices** result in disparate outcomes for our students of color, students living in poverty, students receiving special education and English Learner services, students who identify as LGBTQ+, and highly mobile student populations.
- Requires education leaders to develop an understanding of historical contexts; engage students, families, and community representatives as partners in decision-making; and actively dismantle systemic barriers, replacing them with policies and practices that ensure all students have access to the instruction and support they need to succeed in our schools.



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# Goals & Objectives



## Understanding the 1% Participation Cap

Federal Requirements and Consequences  
State Data  
District Guidance

## Who are WA-AIM Testers?

SWSCD  
Eligibility Criteria  
Non considerations

## Root Causes

Data  
Local processes and practices

## Action Plan

Gathering interest holders  
Using data to plan for improvements  
Implementing new processes, tweaks, and policy



# Understanding the 1% Participation Cap

Federal Regulations  
ESSA language  
Justification requirements



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# 34 CFR § 200.6(c)(2)(3) – ESEA/ESSA

## [Federal Regulation Code Link](#)

*(2) For each subject for which assessments are administered under [§ 200.2\(a\)\(1\)](#), the total number of students assessed in that subject using an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards under [paragraph \(c\)\(1\)](#) of this section may not exceed 1.0 percent of the total number of students in the State who are assessed in that subject.*

(Accountability Assessments RISE, Utah Aspire Plus and DLM (alternate assessment))

*(3) A State must—*

*(ii) Not prohibit an LEA from assessing more than 1.0 percent of its assessed students in any subject for which assessments are administered under [§ 200.2\(a\)\(1\)](#) with an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards;*

*(ii) Require that an LEA submit information justifying the need of the LEA to assess more than 1.0 percent of its assessed students in any such subject with such an alternate assessment;*

*(iii) Provide appropriate oversight, as determined by the State, of an LEA that is required to submit information to the State; and*



# 34 CFR § 200.6(c)(4)

## Federal Regulation Code Link

(4) *If a State anticipates that it will exceed the cap under [paragraph \(c\)\(2\)](#) of this section with respect to any subject for which assessments are administered under [§ 200.2\(a\)\(1\)](#) in any school year, the State may request that the Secretary waive the cap for the relevant subject, pursuant to section 8401 of the Act, for one year. Such request must—*

*(iv) Include a plan and timeline by which—*

*(B) The State will take additional steps to support and provide appropriate oversight to each LEA that the State **anticipates** will assess more than 1.0 percent of its assessed students in a given subject in a school year using an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards to ensure that only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities take an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards. The State must describe how it will monitor and regularly evaluate each such LEA to ensure that the LEA provides sufficient training such that school staff who participate as members of an IEP team or other placement team understand and implement the guidelines established by the State under [paragraph \(d\)](#) of this section so that all students are appropriately assessed; and*



# LEA Justification Letter Requirements

1. LEA name and contact information.
2. The percent of students in the LEA who participated in the alternate assessments in the previous school year by subject (provided in the notification letter).
3. The total number of **all students** in the LEA expected to participate in statewide spring assessments in grades 3-8 and high school during the current school year, by subject.
4. The total number of students in the LEA expected to participate in the alternate assessments in grades 3-8 and high school during the current school year, by subject.
  - *The calculation to determine the expected alternate assessment test rate for the current school year is:*
$$\frac{\text{expected alternate assessment students test total for each subject (4)}}{\text{expected all students test total for each subject (3)}}$$



# LEA Justification Letter Requirements cont.

5. A description of how the LEA is assuring that Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams are adhering to the state [Guidelines for Statewide Accountability Assessment](#) (Page 8 includes WA- AIM identification criteria) and [special education classification definitions](#) to ensure that students qualify to participate in the alternate assessments.
6. Based on a root cause analysis, a brief description of the reason(s) the LEA exceeded the 1% Participation Threshold cap. Possible root causes may include, but are not limited to:
  - 1: LEA and/or school program(s) draw large numbers of families of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to enroll in the LEA. Include the data used to support this root cause analysis.
  - 2: The LEA has a small overall student population and thus it takes only a very few students participating in the alternate assessment to exceed 1%. Include the data used to support this root cause analysis.



# LEA Justification Letter Requirements cont.

7. Any additional justification of variables not covered in the previous item that may contribute to higher numbers of students identified with significant cognitive disabilities being determined eligible to participate in the alternate assessments that would result in an alternate assessment participation rate to exceed 1% Participation Threshold cap.

# Who are WA-AIM Testers?

SWSCD: students with significant cognitive disabilities

Eligibility Criteria

Non considerations



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# Students with the most Significant Cognitive Disabilities

WA has no definition or specific category of Significant Cognitive Disability.

WA does have guidance to help IEP teams identify students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.



# Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities means:

The student:

- has a documented cognitive disability that affects intellectual potential. It is not a new or separate category of disability.
- requires extensive, repeated, individualized instruction and support that is not of a temporary or transient nature.
- uses substantially adapted materials or individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways to acquire, maintain, generalize, demonstrate, and transfer skills across multiple settings, including school, workplace, community and home.
- scores at least two (2) standard deviations below the mean on standardized norm-referenced assessments for adaptive behavior and intellectual functioning.



# Non-Considerations:

The following criteria may **not** be used for alternate assessment participation decisions:

- poor attendance, excessive or extended absences
- disability related to visual or auditory disabilities, emotional-behavioral disabilities, specific learning disabilities, or speech and language impairment
- lack of access to quality instruction in core standards
- social, cultural, linguistic, or economic differences for the WA-AIM
- below average reading or achievement levels
- displays of behaviors or emotional distress during testing
- expectations of poor performance, non-proficiency, or the pre-determined or anticipated impact of the student's performance on the school/district on-grade level assessment scores
- an administrative decision
- the student's disability category, educational placement, type of instruction, and/or amount of time receiving special education services.



# Does Significant Cognitive Disability = Alternate Achievement Standards and Assessment?

## Not necessarily

- A student can have a significant cognitive disability and be able to access the **general education standards/curriculum** and **demonstrate progress and measurable gains** in a supportive general education environment.
- If they can, then that is their Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and they are receiving a free appropriate public education (FAPE).
- The IEP team must **start with the instructional** needs of the student first and **then** consider how a student participates in the assessment last.



# Is it Defensible?



The decision made by the IEP team should be **defensible**.

- Can someone unfamiliar with the student pick up the file and see why the IEP team made the decisions it did?
- Does the data in the file support the decisions?



# Root Causes

## Root Causes

- Internal Processes, Practices, & Beliefs
- External Factors

## Areas to Explore

- Non Testers
- Data Variation
- Test Switchers
- Disability Category



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# Root Causes impacting the 1% participation rate on WA-AIM

- Potential Internal Factors:

- Policies and Practices
  - Students in Life Skills classrooms take WA-AIM
  - If a student can't graduate with SBA, they can take WA-AIM.
  - Nonverbal students can't learn, so they take the WA-AIM.
- Values and Beliefs
  - We don't learn anything useful from testing. (encourage refusals)

- Potential External Factors:

- Proximity to a military base
- In-catchment group home
- Environmental pollution impacting intellectual development
- Social factors (e.g., high drug use) impacting the brain development of babies and children



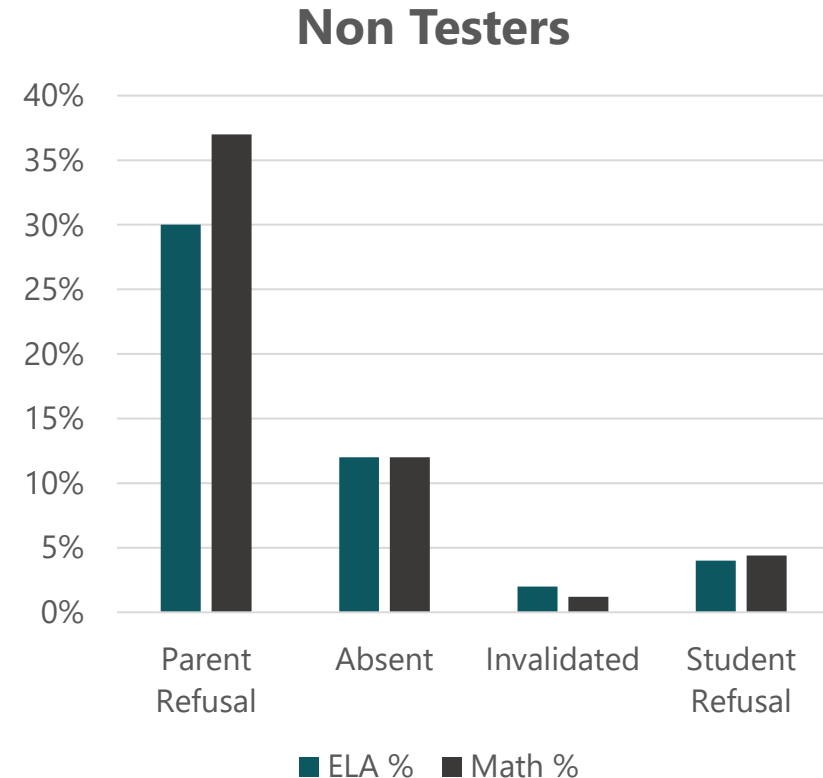
# Areas to explore in the data: non testers

## 1. Why are students not participating in testing?

1. Is absenteeism a factor?
2. Are parents refusing?
3. Are students refusing?
4. Are scores being invalidated?
5. Do we know why they didn't test?
6. Is it the same for SBA and WA-AIM?
7. Has this changed over time?

## 2. In what ways can we change our practice to impact one or more of these factors?

## 3. Who will define/design the new practice?



# Exploring the Data: Increased Numbers

- Is there a general increase in WA-AIM testers anywhere in the data?
- Is there a clear reason?
- How and who might explore this data & determine a fix, cause, or review?

Table 6.1. Number of Students with Valid Test Scores

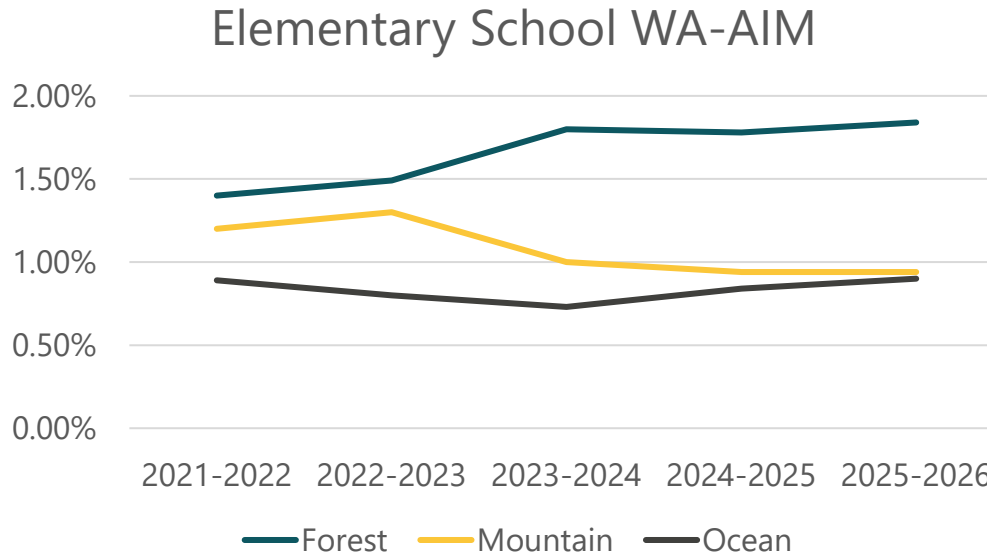
Grade	N of Tested Students 2024–2025	<i>Reference:</i> N of Tested Students 2023–2024	<i>Reference:</i> N of Tested Students 2022–2023	<i>Reference:</i> N of Tested Students 2021–2022
3	970	831	812	720
4	842	790	747	761
5	776	721	775	647
6	768	772	639	599
7	774	642	609	622
8	648	606	631	611
10	797	760	709	653
11	706	677	634	613



# Areas to explore in the data: variation

Look at your district's data to identify if there is significant variation between:

- Teachers
- Schools
- Grades
- Genders
- Races



# Areas to explore in the data: Disability Categories

There are two disability categories that have definitions that specifically rule out a cognitive disability.

- Specific Learning Disability
- Emotional Behavioral Disability.

Students identified for special education services under these categories would not be eligible for WA-AIM testing as their IEP team has determined that they do not have a cognitive disability.

There are other disability categories that are uncommon among WA-AIM testers.

- Communications Disorder
- Sensory Disabilities (hearing and vision-related disabilities)
- Orthopedic Impairment

Data for students identified in these categories may be worth reviewing to ensure eligibility for WA-AIM testing.



# Areas to explore in the data: Test Switchers

There is a gap in complexity between where the WA-AIM tests end and where the SBA tests begin. The following situations are examples of when districts may want to review the evidence used to determine a student's eligibility.

- When students reach grade 8 or 10 and are identified for WA-AIM after years of SBA testing.
- When students switch back and forth between SBA/WCAS and WA-AIM in different grades. It may be worth taking a second look at students whose IEP teams are inconsistent in assigning a testing pathway to ensure the student is eligible for WA-AIM.
- When students take SBA/WCAS tests for one content area and WA-AIM for another. Significant cognitive disabilities are not content-specific, and students may not take WA-AIM for some content area assessments and SBA for others. If a student is taking both, then a secondary review of the student's eligibility data may be needed.



# Before We Look at the Data...

- What questions might we try to use data to answer with regard to WA-AIM?
  - Let's brainstorm some of the questions that might be useful to consider as we look at the 1% participation threshold.
- Is data available to answer the questions?
- Where is that data?



# Let's Take a Look

- Use your computer to access WAMS ([eds.ospi.k12.wa.us](https://eds.ospi.k12.wa.us))
  - View My Applications → Washington Assessment Management System
- Select the **File Downloads** tab
- Choose **2025 Administration** on the left.
- Choose District Participation Summary under **WA-AIM Historic Participation**



# What do you see?

- Take five minutes and look at the data and consider anything that jumps out at you. (take notes)
- After 5 minutes take 10 minutes to talk with a partner.
  - What do you notice in the data?
  - Did anything surprise you?
  - What additional data do you need?
  - What other data sources could offer insight into WA-AIM identification trends or outliers?

## Spreadsheet Outline

- **Column E&F:** School Year and Content Area
- **Column I:** Percent testing on WA-AIM.
- **Column J-Y:** disability categories
- **Column Z-AI:** Testers by Grade



# Thoughts, Reflection

- Any insights, direction, or questions that were brought on by this look in the data?



# What to do next

- Connect with your Special Education, Data, and Assessment leads and
  - Review the data
  - Determine any changes that need to be made to training and review processes around WA-AIM decision making.
  - Complete the [Justification form](#).



# Thank you.

Evaluation is located here: [WA-AIM 1 Percent Presentation Evaluation](https://forms.office.com/r/KHzXc6xNxU) We do intend to offer clock hours for this session. If you would like to be included in the clock hours, please complete the evaluation.

(<https://forms.office.com/r/KHzXc6xNxU>)

Leslie Huff, Ph.D.

Alternate Assessment Coordinator

[Leslie.huff@k12.wa.us](mailto:Leslie.huff@k12.wa.us)



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