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Washington County School District 2009 Criterion-Referenced Test Results

**Brad Ferguson, Ph.D.
Director of Assessment and Research**

bferguson@admin.washk12.org

During the last six weeks of the 2008-09 school year elementary and secondary students from across the state participated in a series of assessments designed to test their understanding of the concepts in the core subjects of Language Arts, Math, and Science. The tests are referred to as Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRT) because a criterion—or cut-score—is set for each test that indicates proficiency in the subject.

In the Washington County School District about 8,000 elementary students (grades 2-5) and about 10,500 secondary students (grades 6-11) took these tests. The Language Arts CRTs cover the curriculum from 2nd to 11th grade, respectively. The Math CRTs are from 2nd -7th grade and are also administered in Pre-Algebra, Algebra, and Geometry. (A test was given for students in Algebra 2 in 2009, but proficiency levels will not be reported until the 2010 administration.) The Science CRTs cover the curriculum in grades 4th - 8th, and are also administered in Earth Systems, Biology, Chemistry, and Physics.

Over all, about 50,400 CRTs were administered in the Washington County School District. In the past, students took the CRTs using the traditional paper-pencil method of reading questions from a test booklet and then filling in a bubble on a separate answer form. This year, about 80% of our students took a computer-based form of the CRT. Questions on the computer-based and paper-based forms of the test were identical. The major difference between the two methods was that a score for each student taking the CRT via computer was available to the teacher within 24 hours. With paper-based tests, teachers must wait until the summer to have the results scored and returned from the Utah State Office of Education. Teachers and administrators across the Washington County School District found the computer-based version of the CRTs to be very engaging for students, and are anxious to extend computer based CRT testing to as many subjects as can be accommodated in their computer labs next year.

Significant Changes in Math Curriculum and Math CRTs for 2009

The following is an example of one of the concepts now taught in Algebra and tested on the Algebra CRT:

*Use the Quadratic Formula to solve the following equation.
Give the exact solutions and check both solutions.*

$$x^2 + 15x + 54 = 0$$

In response to concerns from legislators, higher education officials, and math experts saying the state math curriculum was not research-based and was not adequately preparing students, a new elementary and secondary math curriculum was implemented at the beginning of the 2007-08 school year. At the close of the 2008-09 school year students across the state took the new math CRT. Because a new test requires new standard setting (i.e., setting the proficiency cut-scores), earlier this summer teachers and math experts from around the state met to set the cut-scores that would be applied to the 2009 math CRTs. The committee discussed concerns that proficiency cut-scores on the old math CRTs were too low, which resulted in many students being identified proficient who were, in reality, not prepared for the next course in the math sequence. In most cases, the use of new cut-scores resulted in fewer students being identified as proficient compared to prior years.

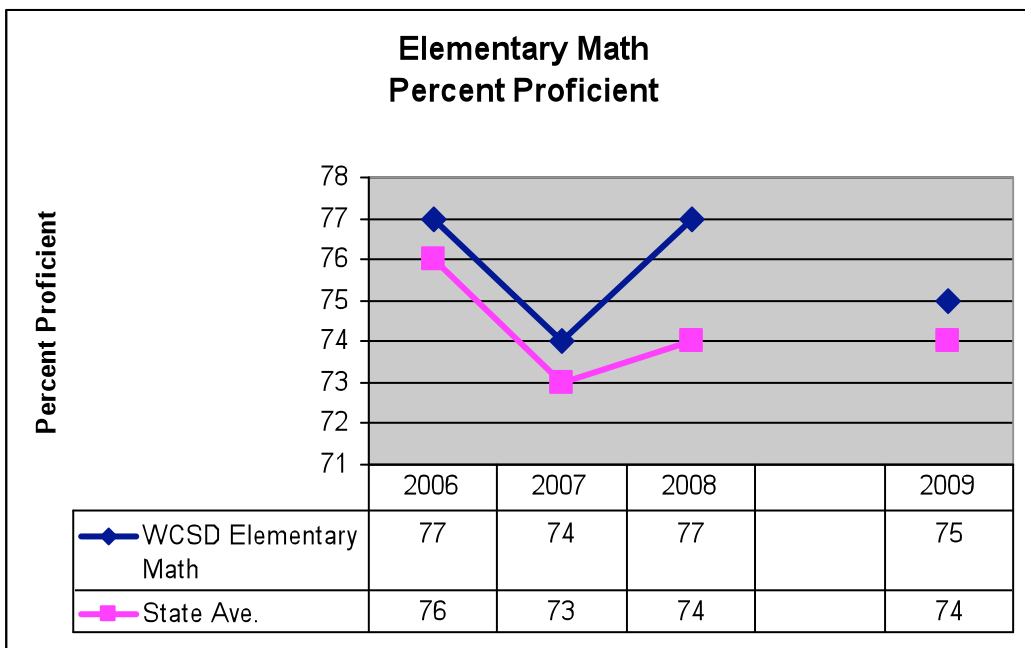
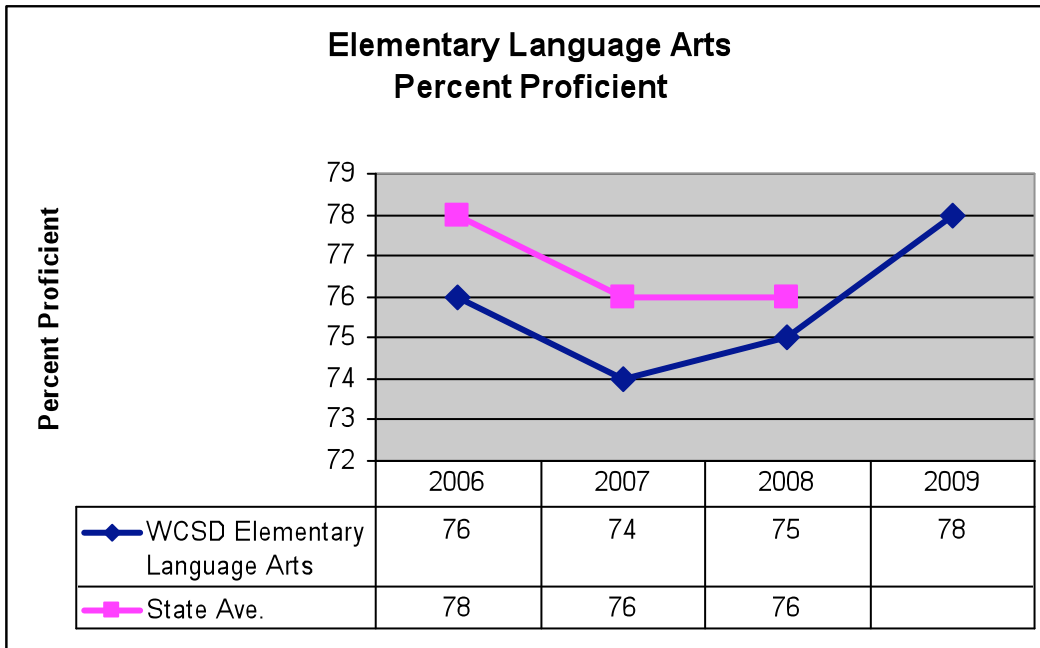
Here are some of the key points regarding the new Math curriculum and the new CRT Math cut-scores:

- The new math curriculum is more challenging and the bar for proficiency has been raised.
- The Washington County School District was better positioned to integrate the new math core in our elementary schools because of our decision to implement *Growing with Math* in 2006.
- An increase in rigor and more attention to real proficiency should result in even better math placement decisions at the secondary level in the future.
- 2008 to 2009 Math CRT comparisons cannot be made.

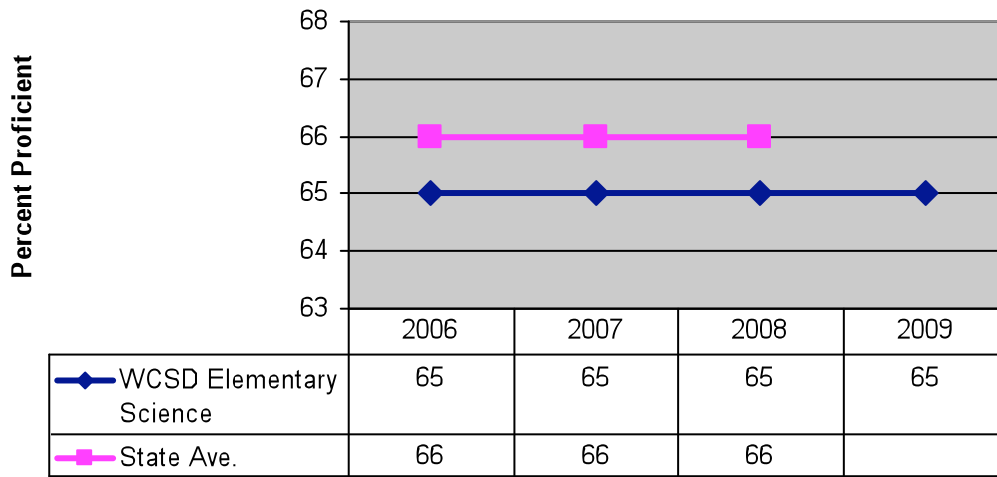
Washington County School District CRT Results

The following tables show the percent of students proficient by subject and grade/course in the elementary (grades 2-5) and secondary (grades 6-11) schools in the Washington County School District over the last four years. (State average information for 2009 Language Arts and Science is not yet available.)

Elementary

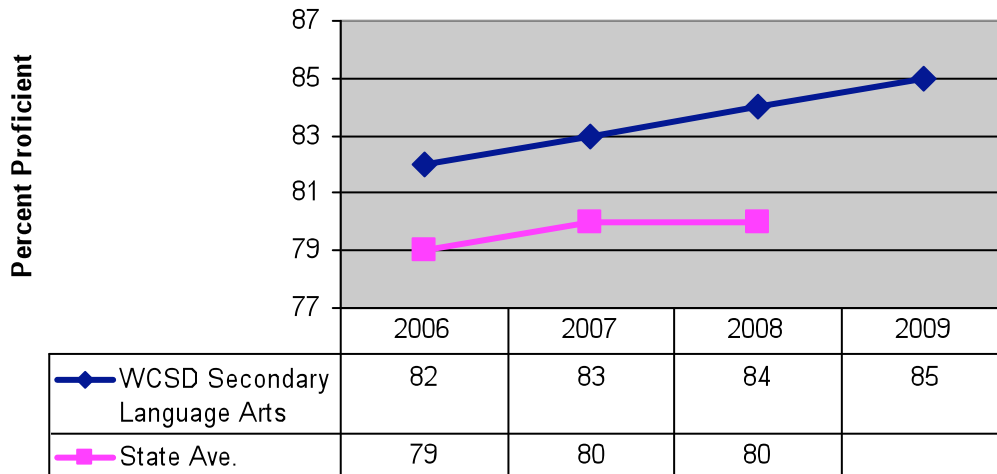


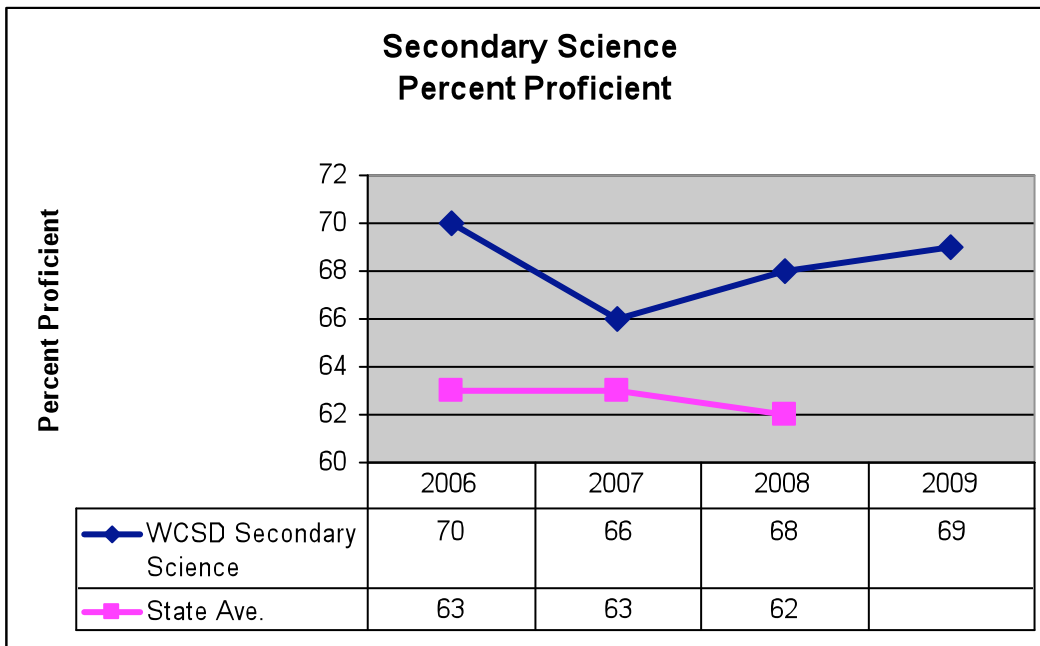
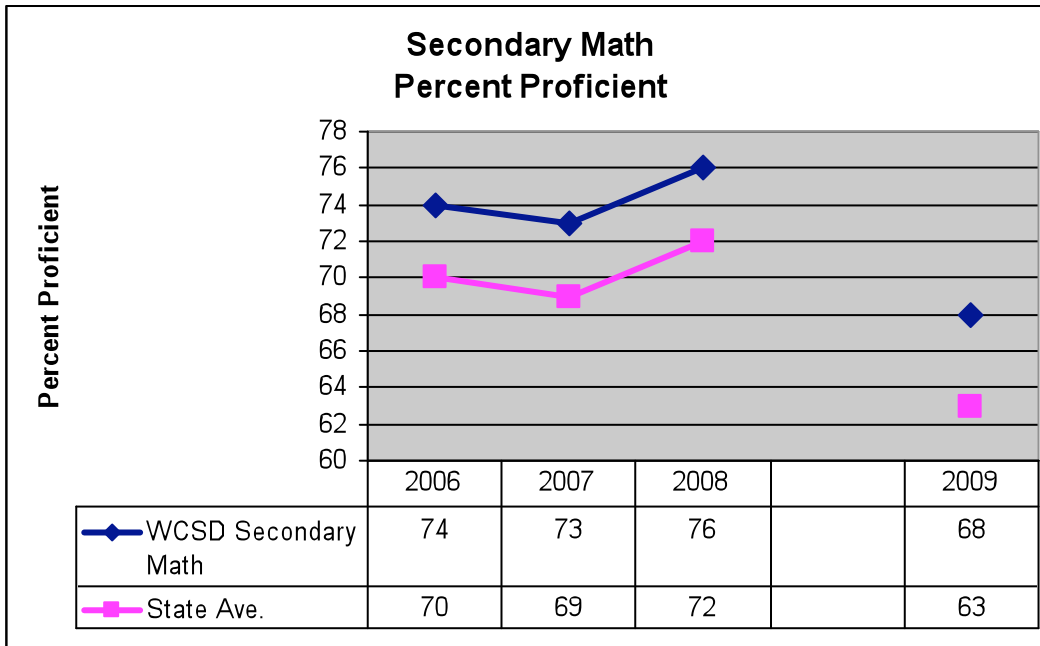
Elementary Science Percent Proficient



Secondary

Secondary Language Arts Percent Proficient





Interpretation Highlights

1. Washington County School District CRT results for the 2008-09 school year are generally positive.
2. Based on the trend line we expect that the percent of students proficient in elementary Language Arts will meet or exceed the state average for 2009.
3. Because of the changes in the cut-scores for the Math CRTs, direct comparisons of 2009 outcomes with prior years are not possible. (The gap in the graph lines between 2008 and 2009 represents this discontinuity.)

4. With the changes in the CRT Math proficiency cut scores, the over-all percent of students proficient in the Washington County School exceeds the 2009 state average.