



# THE STANDARD DEVIATION

Fall 2004

Washington Educational Research Association  
<http://www.wera-web.org>

University Place, WA

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## **Hot Websites**

- <http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/neurok.html>  
- Learning and the brain
- <http://www.k12.wa.us/Communications/progressreport.aspx>  
- Progress report from OSPI

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## **Blue Ribbon Winners Headed to D.C. for Award Ceremony**

*Six Washington schools selected for national honor*

**OLYMPIA – Nov. 2, 2004** – Representatives from the six Washington state schools chosen as *No Child Left Behind* Blue Ribbon Schools for 2004 have been invited back to Washington, D.C. for a celebration of their success in early November. This year's winners, nominated by State Superintendent Terry Bergeson and selected by the U.S. Department of Education, include:

- Woodward Middle School, Bainbridge Island School District
- International School, Bellevue School District
- Marvista Elementary, Highline School District
- Pateros School, Pateros School District
- Franklin Elementary, Spokane School District
- Wainwright Elementary, Tacoma School District

The *No Child Left Behind* Blue Ribbon Schools program recognizes schools that make significant progress in closing the achievement gap or whose students achieve at very high levels. To be eligible for the award, a school must either be achieving in the top 10 percent of schools with high levels of poverty or in the top 10 percent overall (no poverty factor included).

### **The WERA Mission**

The mission of the Washington Educational Research Association is to improve the professional practice of educators engaged in instruction, assessment, evaluation, and research.

### **WERA Services**

- WERA provides professional development through conferences, publications, and seminars.
- WERA provides forums to explore thoughtful approaches and a variety of views and issues in education.
- WERA provides consultation and advice to influence educational policy regarding instruction, assessment, evaluation, and research.

## **Welcome from WERA's President Frosyne Mensendick**

Summer came and went, fall is definitely upon us, and our annual WERA/OSPI Assessment Conference is drawing near - December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup>. How quickly time passes. Thankfully though, the various teams of people with whom I work accomplish a myriad of tasks in what seems to be fleeting moments. Your WERA Board began last May to set goals for 2004-2005. The board members and I are excited about our plans for this year and are eager to serve you, our members.

WERA strives to provide members with new information and research related to educational issues. Funds are being expended this year to continue the Data Displays for Data Analysis (DD4DA), an effort begun four years ago by WERA to support Assessment Directors with a venue to share state testing results. Joe Kinney and Duncan MacQuarrie have been committed to supporting this application and will be sharing data CDs with members who historically requested this product. Please don't hesitate to contact me or other WERA Board members should you have questions about the DD4DA project. An overview session will be held as one of the breakout sessions at the December conference.

Another on-going project has been the updating and redesigning of our website. We are striving this year to further improve our use of technology to benefit our members. You'll note that both membership dues and conference registrations can now be paid by credit card online through our website. The membership directory, posted from the previous full year membership, is now one that can be used to search for a particular person or group. You'll see other new uses for technology at the December Annual Assessment Conference that we think may interest you as you consider technology options for teaching and learning.

WERA's purpose as an organization includes to "identify and define educational issues and provide a forum for their discussion." Certainly in this politically charged election year we have been witness to many issues. While the 2004 general elections will be over by the time you receive this newsletter, there will still be many questions unresolved about the future of education at both the national and state level. I welcome you to become actively involved in WERA, to afford yourself the opportunity to meet with colleagues, to problem-solve and strategize for progressive and attainable improvement in education.

Also please watch for a new WERA offering this winter. In addition to our two planned conferences, we will host a full day seminar as a new professional development activity. This offering is a follow-up to many requests received last spring following Dr. Bob Marzano's presentation. Your WERA Board strives to respond to suggestions made by the members. We'll be seeking input from you again via survey questions on the Winter Assessment Conference evaluation form. Please let us know how we can support you.

Finally, if you haven't already signed up to receive the electronic Progress Report OSPI Policy Updates newsletter emailed to subscribers monthly, then do so. It's mentioned on our "hot websites" at the front of this newsletter because WERA leadership believes it provides very current information from OSPI on educational issues in our state. For a free subscription you can email your request to <http://www.k12.wa.us/Communications/progressreport.aspx>.

See you at the Annual Assessment Conference, December 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>.



## WERA'S 2004/2005 Conferences



### WERA/OSPI State Assessment Conference

**December 1-3, Seattle Airport Hilton Hotel**

*Assessment and Education Reform: What's New? What's Now? What's Coming?*

Ten pre-conference trainings are scheduled for Wednesday, December 1, 2004: Classroom Assessment, Curriculum, Scorer Training, Standards, Grade Level Expectations: A New Level of Specificity, Individualized Alternate Assessments, Mathematics WASL Items for 2006 and Beyond, From Research and Experience, Health for the Future, and the Assessment Directors Network meeting.

Thursday morning, Dr. Terry Bergeson will kick off the conference with her annual update of the status of education in Washington State. Our other keynoters are Dr. John Bransford, editor of How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience and School and Dr. Marilyn Whirry, NAEP Ambassador, 2000 National Teacher of the Year, who will discuss *Teaching, Assessment and Motivation for Teachers and Students*.

Additionally, over 40 different breakout sessions teachers and administrators will be available as program choices. *Washington State Assessment Issues: What's Hot!*, *AYP Policies and Recent Results*, *High School Initiative to Increase Academic Achievement*, *Keynote follow-up*, *The WASL in Writing*, and *No Matter How You Add it Up, Math Counts More Than Ever* are a few of those sessions.

And of course we will have the popular Praeger's Follies! See the next page for the winner of last year's Assessment Conference Follies.

If you still haven't registered for the conference, go to WERA's website: <http://www.wera-web.org>.

## WERA 2005 SPRING CONFERENCE

*Politics and Pedagogy*



When? **March 3-4, 2005** with pre-conference sessions on **March 2**

Where? **Seattle Airport Hilton Hotel**

Chairs: **Michael Power, Bob Silverman**

Keynoters: Well-known university scholars and writers **Larry Cuban** (Stanford) and **Lorrie Shepard** (University of Colorado). Conference registration information will be mailed in January. If you are interested in being a presenter, fill out the form on page 7 and send to one of the listed co-chairs. For more information, check out the WERA website [www.wera-web.org](http://www.wera-web.org).

**Congratulations to Cecelia Dever, winner of the 2003 Assessment Conference's Praeger's Follies!!**

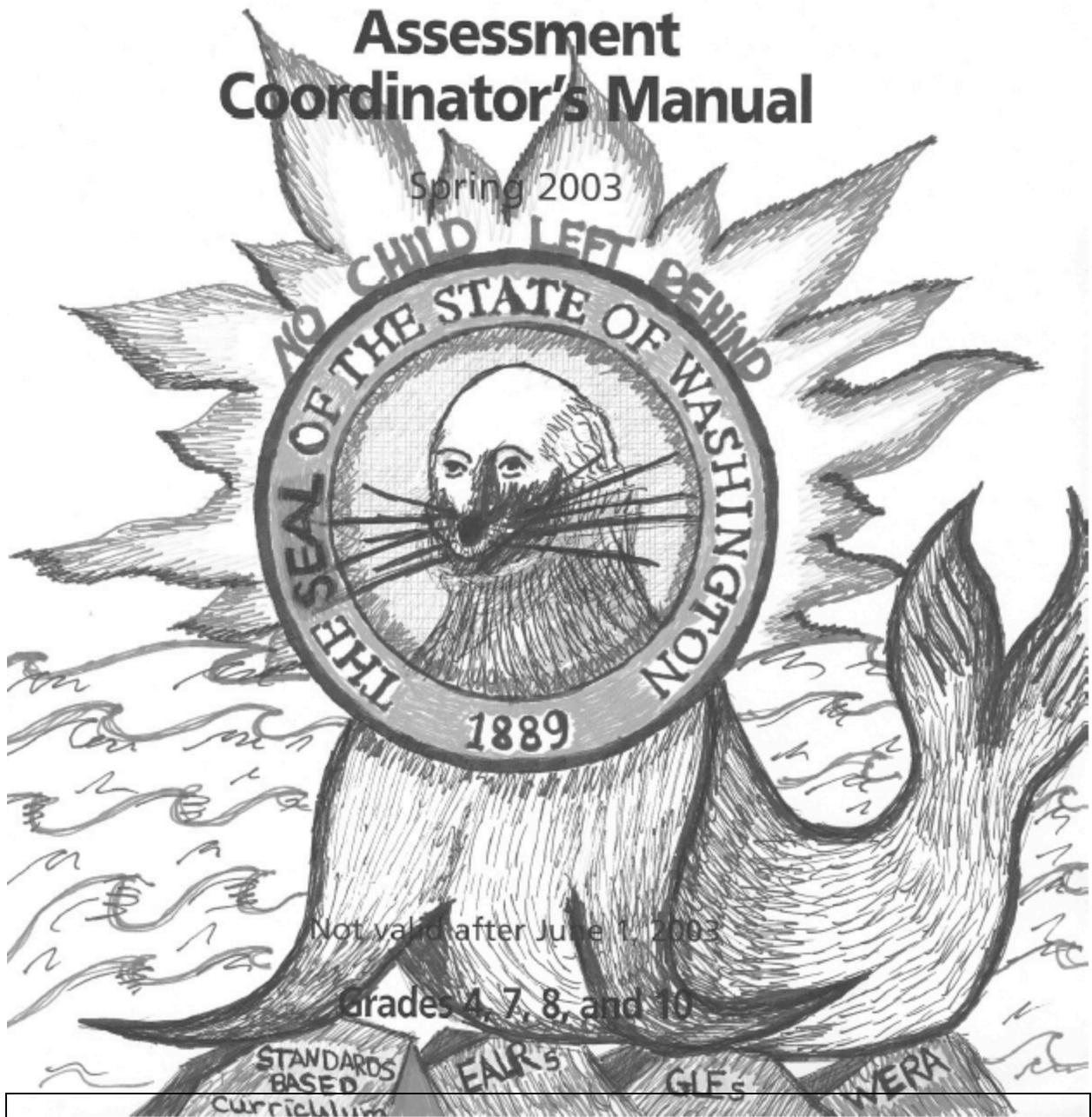
CECELIA  
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Northshore S.D.

# WASL—Washington Assessment of Student Learning

A Component of the Washington State Assessment Program

## Assessment Coordinator's Manual

Spring 2003



Not valid after June 1, 2003

Grades 4, 7, 8, and 10

STANDARDS  
BASED  
CURRICULUM

EAR'S

GLE'S

WERA

## WERA READS!



**How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School**  
 Reviewed by Nancy Arnold  
 WERA Board Member



How People Learn, edited by John D. Bransford, Ann L. Brown, and Rodney R. Cocking, draws on research from across several domains of inquiry with the purpose of informing student learning. The authors examine these research findings and their implications for changing what we teach, how we teach it, and how we assess what our students learn.

I found the CD version of the book easy to navigate and the main concepts clearly described. The book provides many examples of exemplary teaching practices to illustrate how instructional approaches based on what we know produce in-depth learning. Strategies are included for addressing four areas when designing effective instruction:

1. Schools and classrooms must be learner centered.
2. Teachers must consider what is taught, why it is taught, and what mastery looks like (content-centered).
3. Use on-going assessment designed to make students' thinking visible (assessment-centered).
4. Develop norms for the classroom and school that support core learning values (community-centered).

Dr. Bransford further elaborates on these strategies in How People Learn.

1. **Learner-Centered:** Teachers must pay close attention to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that learners bring into the classroom. This incorporates the preconceptions regarding subject matter already discussed, but it also includes a broader understanding of the learner.

2. **Content-Centered:** Attention must be given to what is taught (information, subject matter), why it is taught (understanding), and what competence or mastery looks like. Many curricula fail to support learning with understanding because they present too many disconnect facts in too short a time – the “mile wide, inch deep” problem. The knowledge-centered environment incorporates the teaching of meta-cognitive strategies that further facilitate future learning.

3. **Assessment-Centered:** Formative assessments—ongoing assessments designed to make students' thinking visible to both teachers and students—are essential. The assessments should be learner-friendly and provide students with opportunities to revise and improve their thinking, help students see their own progress over the course of weeks or months, and help teachers identify problems that need to be remedied.

4. **Community-Centered:** Learning is influenced in fundamental ways by the context in which it takes place. A community-centered approach requires the development of norms for the classroom and school, as well as connections to the outside world, that support core learning values. Teachers must attend to designing classroom activities and helping students organize their work in ways that promote the kind of intellectual camaraderie and the attitudes toward learning that build a sense of community.

**Dr. Bransford will model, as well as present, these ideas at the WERA/OSPI Assessment Conference on the afternoon of December 2.**

## **WERA/OPEN Guidelines for Reviewing Test Preparation Materials**

WERA is interested in developing publications related to educational research, evaluation, assessment and other topics for its members. To support this interest, WERA publishes occasional “white papers” on topics that have been thoroughly researched and then reviewed by our board. The most recent white paper published by our organization was written jointly by a group of assessment experts in Washington and Oregon. It concerns criteria for choosing test preparation materials. The following are excerpts from that paper. The complete text can be downloaded from our website.

Teachers and administrators are feeling increased pressure from state and federal accountability systems to improve students’ scores on tests. In response to this pressure, they often turn to special, sometimes questionable strategies and materials to help students prepare for tests. Many teachers and administrators are not clear about the line between proper and improper test preparation. It is the intent of this paper to provide guidance for the review and selection of appropriate test preparation strategies and materials. It should be noted, however, that neither WERA nor OPEN (Oregon Program Evaluators Network) intends to review or rate existing test preparation strategies or materials. Rather, these guidelines are aimed at those professionals responsible for choosing materials and who best know the local educational context in which a particular set of strategies or materials will be used.

### **Introduction and Context**

The public is for educational accountability and believes that holding teachers more responsible for their students’ achievement will result in greater learning and a better education for all students. Many also believe that the best information about student achievement comes from tests. Over the past decade and a half, states, including Washington and Oregon, have responded to these public demands for greater accountability by initiating large-scale testing programs. The federal law also requires annual reporting of school and district progress toward achieving a 100 percent success rate for students on state assessment goals by 2014.

### **Defensible Test Preparation Practices and Questions to Consider**

There are generally accepted guidelines for educationally defensible and ethical (and legal) test preparation practices (e.g. NCME, 1995; WERA, 2001). These guidelines strongly encourage education professionals to determine the appropriateness of test preparation strategies and materials prior to their use in preparing students for an actual test. It is essential that proposed materials or strategies be reviewed carefully to identify and evaluate their appropriateness, relevance, efficacy, and costs relative to the purposes of the test(s) to be administered and the students to be tested. Michael Scriven (2000) has proposed a checklist that has some utility for evaluating the appropriateness of test preparation strategies and materials. Adapting Scriven’s checklist produces a set of questions that responsible professionals should consider: (The following questions are the topic headings and do not include the sub questions below each question.)

1. What is the need?
2. Have field trials established usefulness for the intended setting?
3. Has effectiveness been established?
4. What are the short-and long-term results?
5. Has a systematic evaluation been conducted?
6. Have all actual costs been determined?
7. Finally, is the proposed intervention defensible to all interested parties?

Included in the white paper is an “Evaluation Checklist for Reviewing Test Preparation Materials,” which was adapted from Scriven’s work. See <http://www.wera-web.org> for complete text.

**Washington Educational Research Association  
Spring Conference, March 2-4, 2005  
Seattle Airport Hilton Hotel Conference Center  
"Politics and Pedagogy"**

**Presenter's Proposal Form**

Please indicate if this proposal is for a:  half-day pre-conference **or**  75 minute breakout session

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ FAX \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title \_\_\_\_\_ Employer \_\_\_\_\_

If you plan to have others assist in this presentation, list them below for inclusion in the program. Include their name, institution/employer, and title:

Complete these lines *only if the presenter listed above is not the person to contact* about this presentation:

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Complete mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Presentation Title:**

**Brief Description of Presentation:** (Please limit to about 50 words, edit carefully, and write legibly.)

\*\*\*\**This is for inclusion into the program. An interesting description will attract people to come.*\*\*\*\*

**Primary Audience(s):** (Check all that apply. This will not limit who comes to your presentation; it just helps us to assure there are presentations for each of these groups.)

- Teachers    Building Administrators    Central Office Staff    University Staff  
 Research/Evaluation/Assessment Specialists    Elementary    Middle Sch.    Sr. High

**Schedule conflict:** (Please use only if you are unavailable to present on the indicated day/time.)

Unable to present on Thursday, March 3 in  morning; in  afternoon

Unable to present on Friday, March 4 in  morning; in  afternoon

Return this ***completed*** form ASAP, but no later than **December 22, 2004** to one of the following:  
Michael Power, Mercer Island School District, 4160 86<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE, Mercer Island, WA 98040  
(fax: 206-236-3370, email: mike\_power@misd.wednet.edu) **or** Bob Silverman (fax: 253-840-8960,  
email: RJSilverman@puyallup.k12.wa.us

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Washington Educational  
Research Association  
P.O. Box 64489  
University Place, WA 98464

[www.wera-web.org](http://www.wera-web.org)

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US POSTAGE PAID  
TACOMA, WA  
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Frosyne Mensendick, *President*  
VP State Assessments  
Pearson Educational Measurement  
(206) 783-0998  
(206) 783-9929 (fax)  
[frosyne.mensendick@person.com](mailto:frosyne.mensendick@person.com)

Nancy Arnold, *At-Large Member*  
Alternate Assessment Specialist  
OSPI  
(360) 725-6089  
(360) 586-2728 (fax)  
[narnold@ospi.wednet.edu](mailto:narnold@ospi.wednet.edu)

Gene Sementi, *At-Large Member*  
Principal  
West Valley School District  
(509) 922-5488  
(509) 928-3676 (fax)  
[gene.sementi@wvwsd.com](mailto:gene.sementi@wvwsd.com)

Dan Phelan, *President Elect*  
Director, Student Success  
Lake Washington School District  
(425) 702-3387  
(425) 861-7765 (fax)  
[dphelan@lkwash.wednet.edu](mailto:dphelan@lkwash.wednet.edu)

Lorna Spear, *At-Large Member*  
Executive Director, Elementary Ed.  
Spokane School District  
(509) 354-7339  
(509) 354-5965  
[Lornas@Spokaneschools.org](mailto:Lornas@Spokaneschools.org)

Leonard Winchell  
*WERA Executive Secretary*  
P.O. Box 64489  
University Place, WA 98464  
(253) 564-4816 (phone or fax)  
[lenwwa@aol.com](mailto:lenwwa@aol.com)

Michael Power, *Past-President*  
Director, Instruction & Assessment  
Mercer Island School District  
(206) 236-3313  
(206) 236-3370 (fax)  
[mike\\_power@misd.wednet.edu](mailto:mike_power@misd.wednet.edu)

Nancy Skerritt  
Assistant Superintendent  
Tahoma School District  
(425) 413-3400  
(425) 413-3455 (fax)  
[nskerrit@tahoma.wednet.edu](mailto:nskerrit@tahoma.wednet.edu)

*Newsletter Editor*  
Sara Smith  
East Valley School District  
Spokane, WA  
(509) 927-3210  
(509) 921-7301 (fax)  
[smiths@evsd.org](mailto:smiths@evsd.org)