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Introduction to the Waterford Assessment of Core Skills (WACS)

The Waterford Assessment of Core Skills (WACS) is a browser-based standardized test. Its purpose is to test student literacy skills so teachers can adjust their instruction as needed.

WACS is administered nationwide twice a year in September/October and April/May. It is also taken year-round in classrooms throughout the country.

Most standardized tests for children are adapted from adult test formats. WACS is unique in that it is designed specifically for young children. It features developmentally appropriate audio instruction and support, full color graphics, and easy navigation.

If you'd like a PDF of the WACS Help Guide to download or print, [click here \(https://files.helpdocs.io/uufzl24u09/other/1571757009866/waterford-7-articles-1571756985.pdf\)](https://files.helpdocs.io/uufzl24u09/other/1571757009866/waterford-7-articles-1571756985.pdf).

Here's a list of links that answer common questions while using WACS:

- [How do I log in to WACS? \(/wacs/wacs-initial-testing-and-comparison-to-other-tests\)](#).
- What can I do from the [Staff \(https://help.waterford.org/wacs/staff-tab\)](https://help.waterford.org/wacs/staff-tab), [Students \(https://help.waterford.org/wacs/students-tab\)](https://help.waterford.org/wacs/students-tab), [Reports \(https://help.waterford.org/wacs/reports-tab\)](https://help.waterford.org/wacs/reports-tab), and [Benchmarks \(https://help.waterford.org/wacs/benchmarks-tab\)](https://help.waterford.org/wacs/benchmarks-tab) tabs?
- [How do I set up a WACS test? \(https://help.waterford.org/wacs/setting-up-a-wacs-test\)](https://help.waterford.org/wacs/setting-up-a-wacs-test).

WACS Initial Testing and Comparison to Other Tests

WACS was initially tested on 8,700 students from 26 schools of varying socioeconomic levels. Students answered randomly generated questions from the program. The test resulted in a total of 2,680 items with over 200 data points.

Student performance on WACS is comparable to the following standardized tests:

- Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)
- Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)

- Idaho Reading Inventory (IRI)
- Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI)
- Stanford Achievement Test 10 (SAT 10)

WACS Testing Format

WACS is hosted by Wyatt, an anthropomorphic cowboy-themed marmot who tests student on literacy skills so they can “earn” a sheriff’s deputy badge.

Wyatt is encouraging and does not tell the students their test score or whether they get an answer wrong.

Each student is tested on three to ten skill sets, based on grade level.

Wyatt walks each student through a tutorial at the beginning of the test and before each assessment. After each tutorial, Wyatt allows the student to complete the section, then explains the next section.

At the end of the assessment, Wyatt “awards” student a deputy badge for completing the test, then the program shuts down. WACS records the student’s test score and assigns them to one of the following proficiency levels (low to high):

- **Deficient**
- **Developing**
- **Proficient**
- **Advanced**

Teachers can then view their students’ test scores and proficiency levels through the WACS Reports tab.

Test Adaptation Algorithm

WACS adapts to each student’s needs by giving easier or harder questions, depending on whether the student answers the previous question correctly.

If the student gets a question wrong, the question lowers in difficulty until it is answered correctly. Once the student submits a correct answer, they are given a harder question until WACS determines their literacy level. The student’s next test section will be determined based on their performance on the previous section.

Some pros of the WACS testing algorithm include:

- Tests all students equally
- Diagnoses literacy skills quickly
- Provides precise data for high/low-scoring students
- Reduces student frustration

Literary Skills Tested on WACS

WACS tests students on the following literacy skills:

- **Phonological Awareness**

- Initial Sound
- Blending
- Segmenting

- **Vocabulary**
- **Listening Comprehension**
- **Phonics**

- Letter Recognition
- Letter Sounds
- Sight Words
- Real Words
- Non-words

- **Reading Comprehension**

Depending on the student's reading level, WACS may not test them on every subject. Most students are tested on between five to ten skill sets.

WACS vs. Waterford Early Learning

WACS and Waterford Early Learning are separate products. Waterford Early Learning is a learning software designed to teach Reading or Math & Science to PreK-2 students. WACS is a literacy skills assessment.

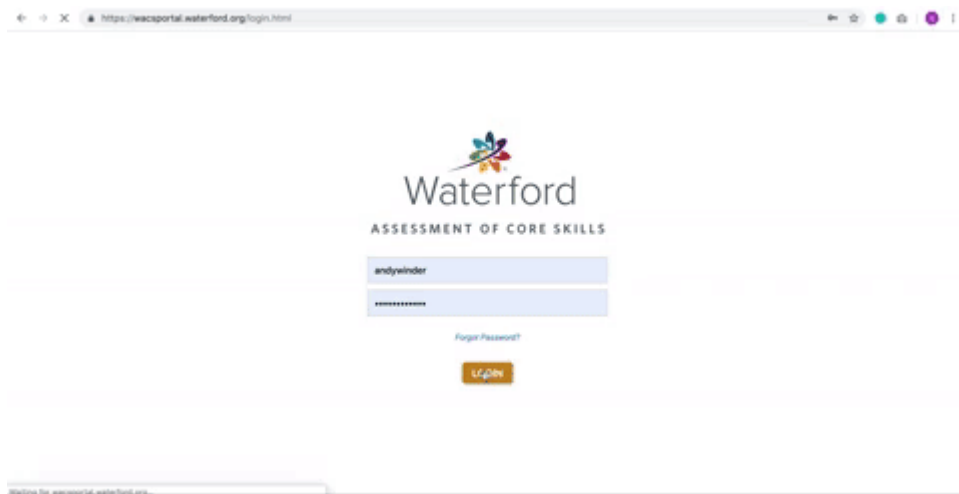
You can buy WACS or Waterford Early Learning as separate products and do not need one to operate the other.

WACS and Waterford Early Learning do, however, share the same database to keep rostering consistent in the two programs. This means that any database change in one applies to the other. It also means that if your student already has a Waterford Early Learning account, it will connect with their WACS profile.



WACS Login Portal

Enter your username and password into the login page (wacsportal.waterford.org). This will take you to the WACS homepage.



If you do not know your account information, contact your school/district administrator.

Staff Tab

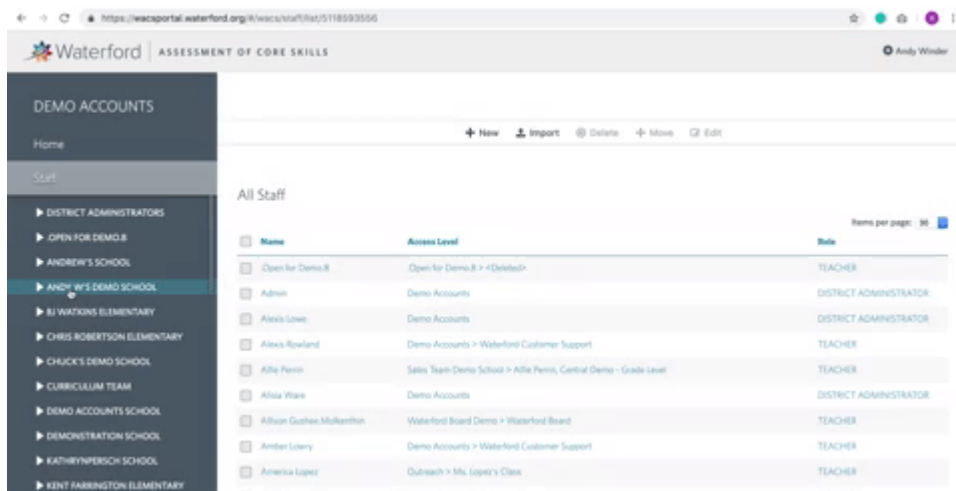
By clicking on the **Staff** tab, you can perform the following actions:

- View the staff and student breakdown for a specific district
- Add, delete, or transfer staff members
- Import staff information by file

Add, Delete, or Transfer Staff Members

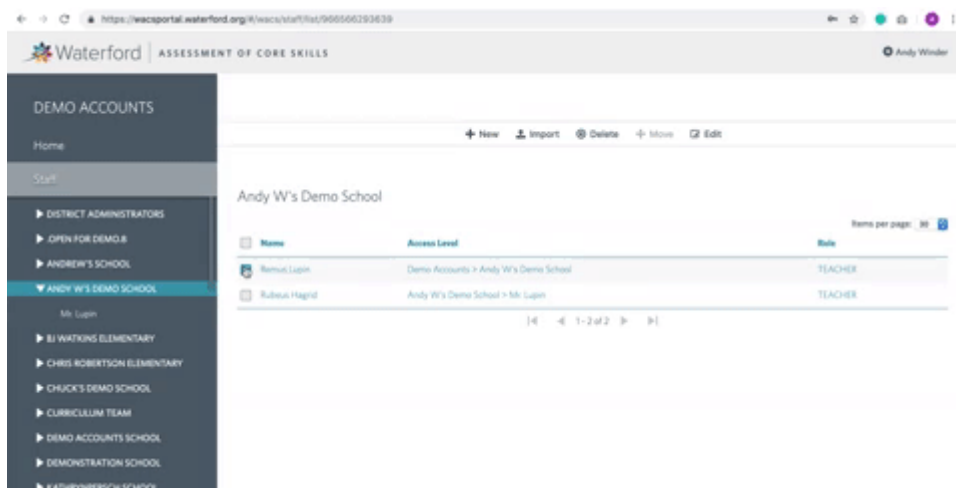
Add a Staff Member:

- 1 Visit the **Staff** tab and select your desired school and classroom.
- 2 Click **+New**.
- 3 Fill out the needed staff information: name, email, and phone number.
- 4 Choose a username, password, and security question for the new account.
- 5 Select whether this is an administrator or teacher account from the **Role** dropdown.
- 6 Click **Save** to confirm your new staff member and create their account.



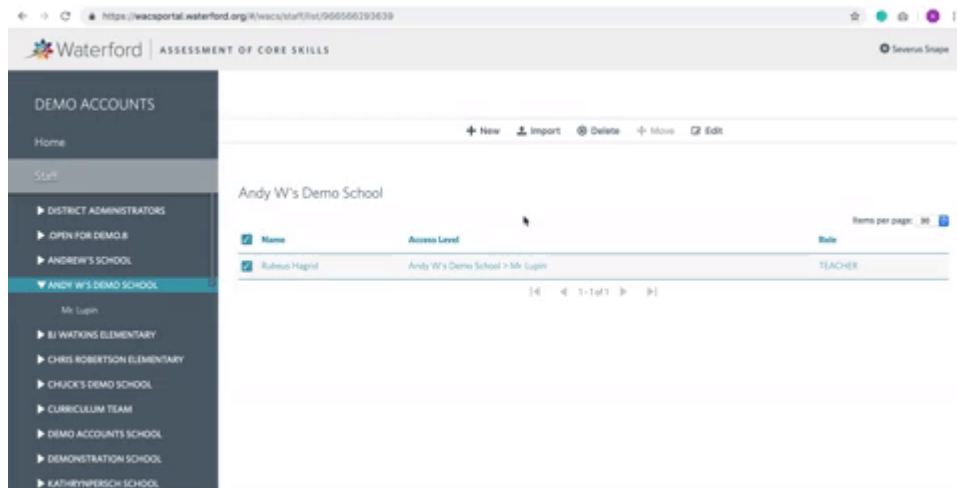
Delete a Staff Member:

- 1 Visit the **Staff** tab and select your desired school and classroom.
- 2 Check the staff member(s) you want to remove and click **Delete**.
- 3 Select **Yes** when the **Please Confirm** window appears to permanently delete your staff member(s).



Transfer a Staff Member:

- 1 Visit the **Staff** tab and select your desired school and classroom.
- 2 Check the staff member(s) you want to transfer and click **Move**.
- 3 Choose the school and classroom you're transferring the staff member(s) to from the dropdown bars.
- 4 Select **Yes** when the **Please Confirm** window appears to transfer your staff member(s).



Import Staff Information

Instead of adding one staff member at a time, you can import multiple staff members by classroom. To import staff information into the WACS system:

- 1 Visit the **Staff** tab and select your desired school and classroom.
- 2 Select **Import**.
- 3 Download the **File Template** and fill it out with your staff members' information.
- 4 Click **Choose File** and select your staff file.
- 5 Click **Show File Preparation Instructions**.
- 6 Follow the import instructions in the Waterford Manager.

Waterford | ASSESSMENT OF CORE SKILLS

Home

Staff

- DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS
- OPEN FOR DEMOS
- ANDREW'S SCHOOL
- ANDY W'S DEMO SCHOOL
 - Mr Lupin
- BJ WATKINS ELEMENTARY
- CHRIS ROBERTSON ELEMENTARY
- CHUCK'S DEMO SCHOOL
- CURRICULUM TEAM
 - Playlist Test
- DEMO ACCOUNTS SCHOOL
 - Early Math & Science - ONLY

New Import Delete Move Edit

Mr. Lupin

Name	Access Level	Role
Rubeus Hagrid	Andy W's Demo School > Mr. Lupin	TEACHER

Items per page: 30

1-1 of 1

Students Tab

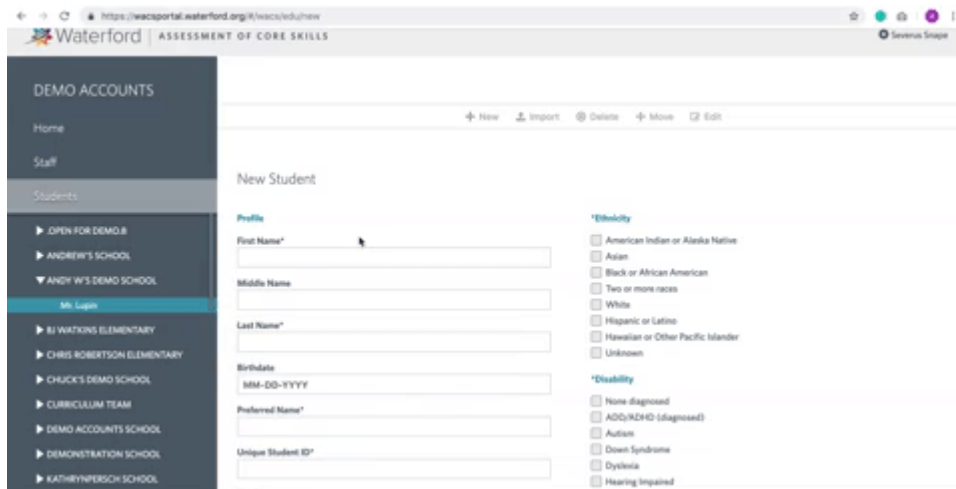
By clicking on the **Students** tab, you can perform the following actions:

- View all WACS students in a school or district, organized by class
- Add, delete, or transfer students
- Import student information by file
- Assign students to a benchmark
- Initialize students
- Adjust a student's time limit

Add, Delete, or Transfer Students

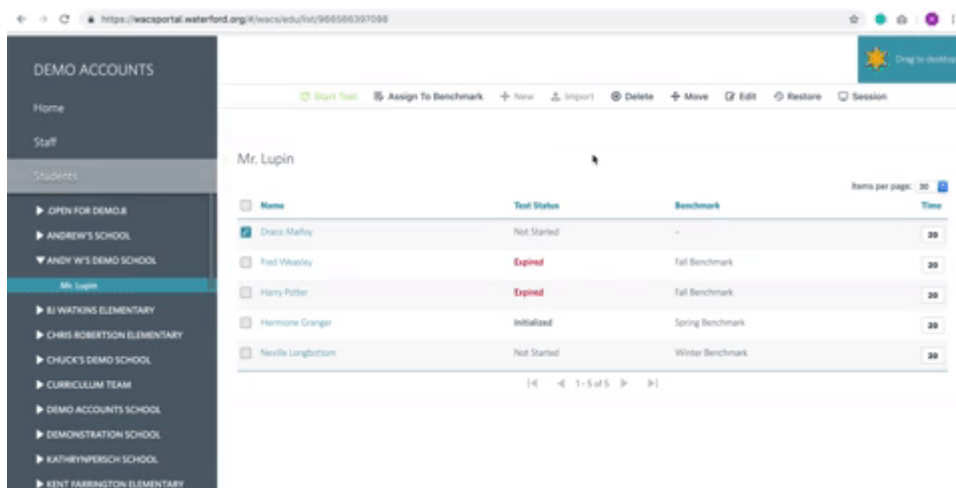
Add a Student:

- 1 Visit the **Students** tab and click **+New**.
- 2 Fill out the new student's identifying information.
- 3 Click **Save** to upload the new student profile.



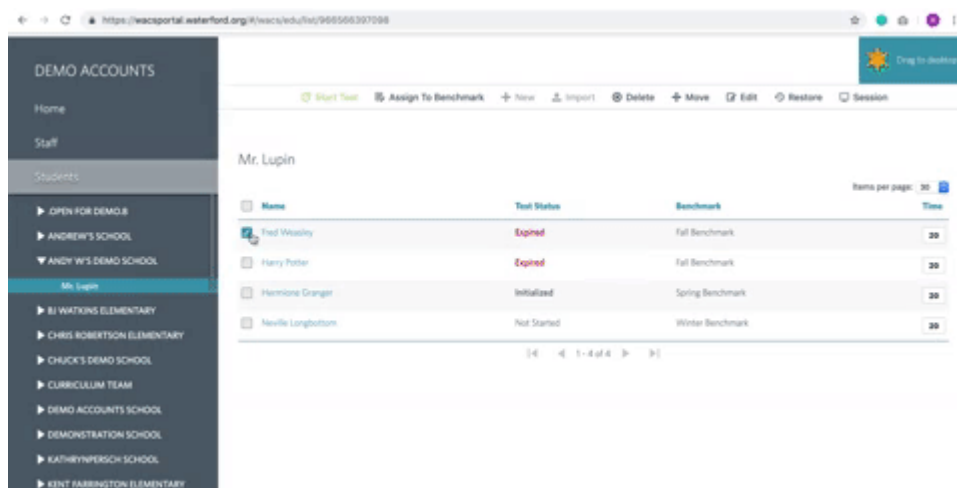
Delete a Student:

- 1 Visit the **Students** tab and select the student(s) you want to delete.
- 2 Click the **Delete** button.
- 3 Select **Yes** when the **Please Confirm** window appears to permanently delete your student.



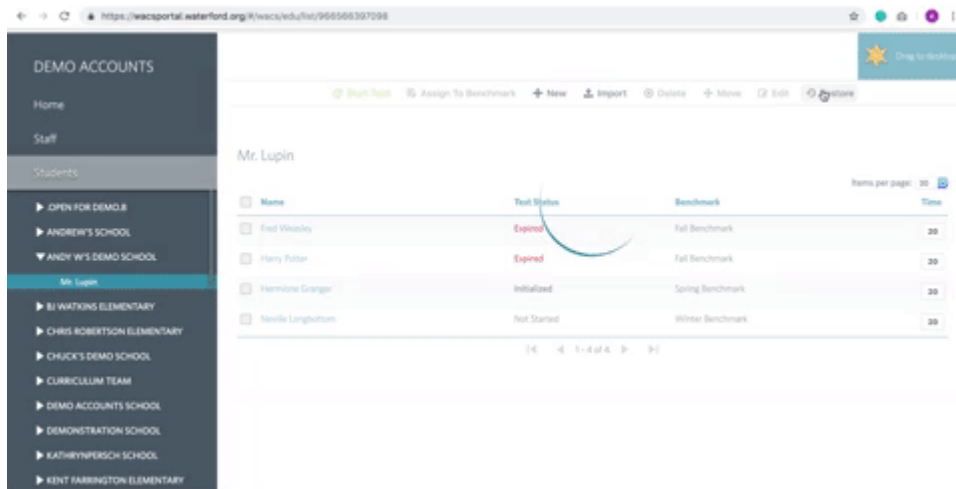
Transfer a Student:

- 1 Visit the **Students** tab and select the student(s) you want to transfer.
- 2 Click **Move**.
- 3 Select the school and class you're transferring your student(s) to from the dropdown bars.
- 4 Click **Save** to finish transferring your student(s).



Restore a Student:

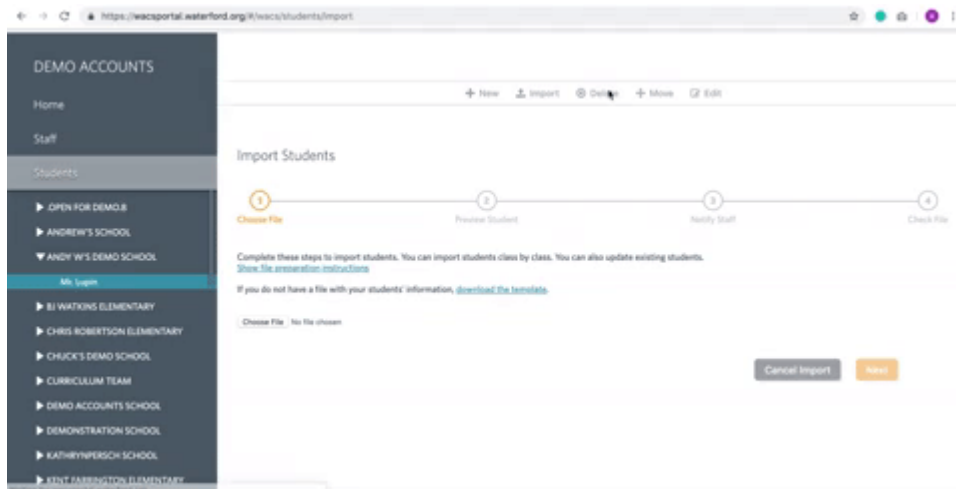
- 1 Visit the **Students** tab.
- 2 Click **Restore**.
- 3 Select the name of the student who you want to restore.
- 4 Click **Save** to finish transferring your student(s).



Import Student Information by File

Instead of adding one student at a time, you can import multiple students by classroom. To import staff information into the WACS system:

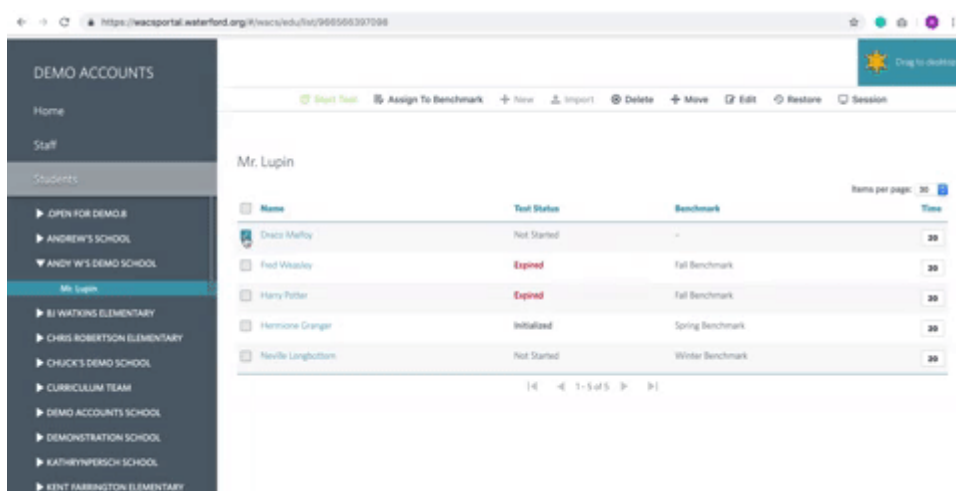
- 1 Visit the **Students** tab and select your desired school and classroom.
- 2 Select **Import**.
- 3 Download the **File Template** and fill it out with your students' information.
- 4 Click **Choose File** and select your student file.
- 5 Click **Show File Preparation Instructions**.
- 6 Follow the import instructions in the Waterford Manager.



Assign Students to Benchmarks

Assigning student(s) to a benchmark indicates when they will take the WACS test. To assign a student to a benchmark:

- 1 Click the **Students** tab and select your classroom.
- 2 Check the student(s) you want to assign, then click **Assign to Benchmark**.
- 3 Select a benchmark from the options in the **Benchmark Dropdown**.
- 4 Click **Save** to confirm your benchmark choice.



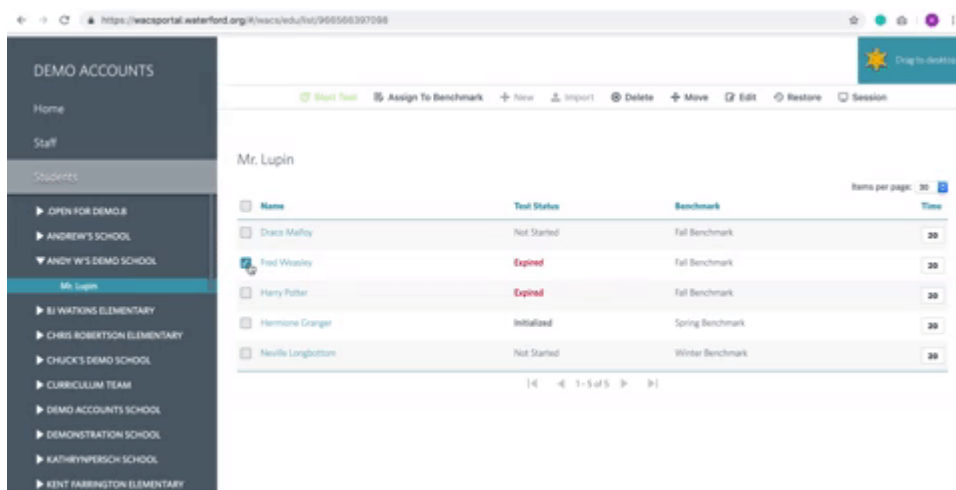
You can change your benchmark selection for a student later, but they can only be assigned to one benchmark at a time.

Initialize Students

Before students can begin WACS, teachers must confirm that their student is allowed to start the test. The WACS system refers to this process as “initializing” students. To initialize a student:

- 1 Click **Students** tab and check the student(s) who are ready to take the test.
- 2 Click the green **Start Test** button.

Those students can now start their WACS test.



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://wacsportal.waterford.org/it/wacs/edu/ist/966566397098>. The interface has a dark sidebar on the left with a 'DEMO ACCOUNTS' menu. The main content area is titled 'Mr. Lupin' and contains a table of students. The table has columns for 'Name', 'Test Status', 'Benchmark', and 'Time'. The 'Time' column has a '20' in a small square next to each student's name. The table lists six students: Draco Malfoy (Not Started), Fred Weasley (Expired), Harry Potter (Expired), Hermione Granger (Initialized), Neville Longbottom (Not Started), and one unnamed student (Not Started).

Name	Test Status	Benchmark	Time
Draco Malfoy	Not Started	Fall Benchmark	20
Fred Weasley	Expired	Fall Benchmark	20
Harry Potter	Expired	Fall Benchmark	20
Hermione Granger	Initialized	Spring Benchmark	20
Neville Longbottom	Not Started	Winter Benchmark	20
	Not Started		20

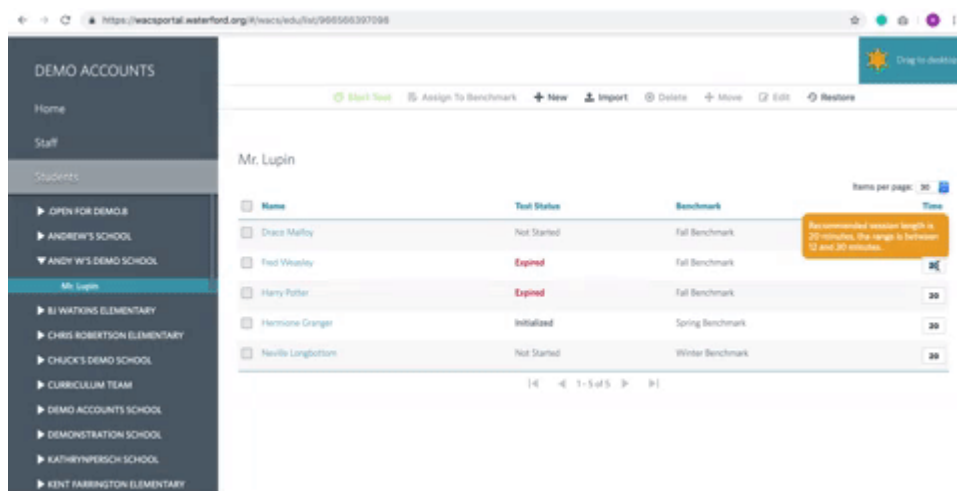
Adjust a Student's Time Limit

The default time limit for a WACS assessment is 20 minutes, but it can be raised or lowered between 12-30 minutes. You can adjust the time limit for individual students or assign a default time to your entire class.

The number in the far right-hand column on the **Students** tab is their time limit (in minutes) to take an assessment. To individually change a student’s time limit:

- 1 Click on the student’s time limit square.

- 2 Replace the default time limit to any number between 12-30 minutes.
- 3 Press enter to save the new time limit.



Kindergarteners work best with a limit between 15-20 minutes.

Benchmarks Tab

Benchmarks are set time periods when students can take the WACS test. Waterford provides three default benchmarks:

- **Fall**
- **Winter**
- **Spring**

These defaults were chosen because they reflect the periods when student skills often change and because teachers usually test their students at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. You can also create up to twelve custom benchmarks for your classroom.

You are limited to twelve custom benchmarks because students shouldn't be tested more than once a month.

By clicking on the **Benchmark** tab, you can perform the following actions:

- View all existing benchmarks
- Add/delete non-default benchmarks
- Enable or disable benchmarks

You can also view the benchmark's current status:

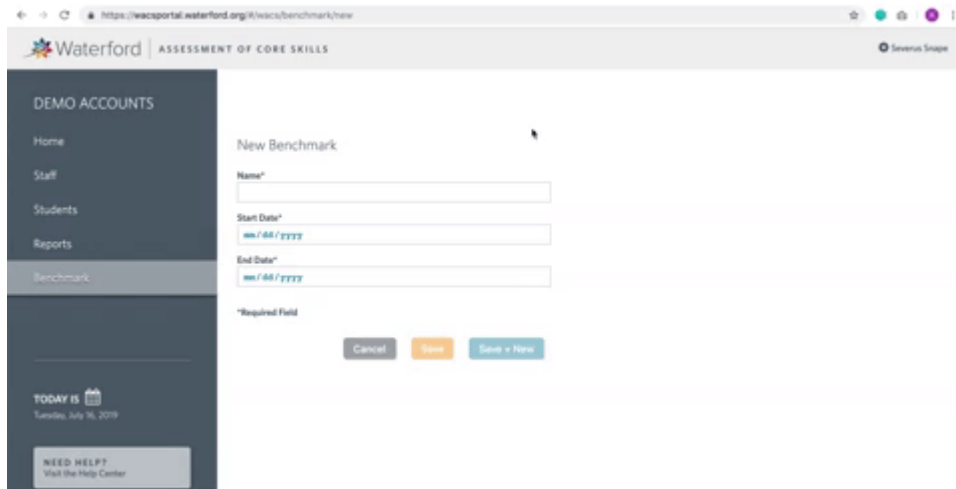
- **In Progress:** students are currently testing during this benchmark
- **Expired:** the benchmark's time period has elapsed
- **Pending:** the benchmark's time period has not yet occurred

Add or Delete Benchmarks

If you do not want to use the default benchmarks, you may create your own instead.

Add a Benchmark:

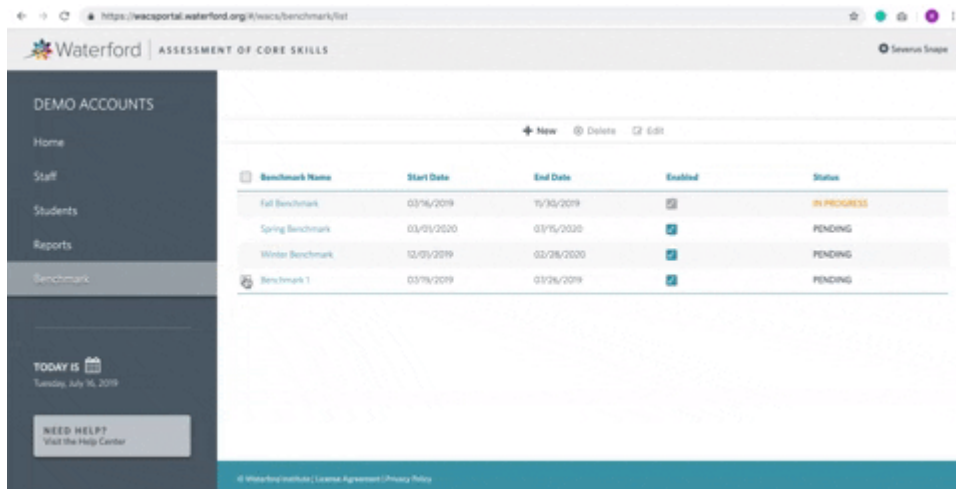
- 1 Visit the **Benchmark** tab, and click on **+New**.
- 2 Fill in the new benchmark's name and start/end dates.
- 3 Click **Save** to confirm the new benchmark.



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://wacsportal.waterford.org/wacs/benchmark/new>. The page header includes the Waterford logo and 'ASSESSMENT OF CORE SKILLS'. A dark sidebar on the left contains a 'DEMO ACCOUNTS' menu with options: Home, Staff, Students, Reports, and Benchmark (which is highlighted). Below the menu, it shows 'TODAY IS' as Tuesday, July 16, 2019, and a 'NEED HELP?' link to the Help Center. The main content area is titled 'New Benchmark' and contains three required text input fields: 'Name*', 'Start Date*' (with a calendar icon and 'mm / dd / yyyy' placeholder), and 'End Date*' (with a calendar icon and 'mm / dd / yyyy' placeholder). A '*Required Field' label is positioned above the 'Save' button. At the bottom of the form are three buttons: 'Cancel', 'Save', and 'Save + New'.

Delete a Custom Benchmark:

- 1 Visit the **Benchmark** tab and select the benchmark(s) you want to delete.
- 2 Click the **Delete** button.
- 3 Select **Yes** when the **Please Confirm** window appears to permanently delete your benchmark.

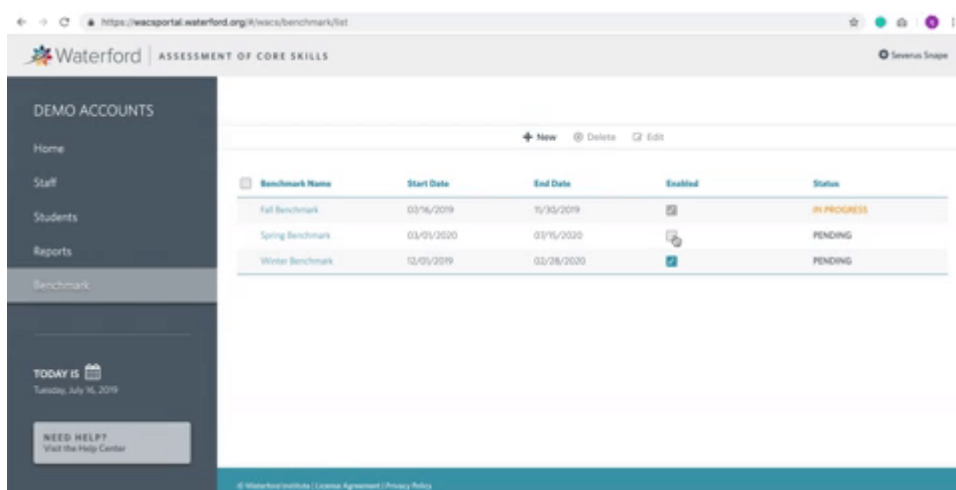


While you can delete your own benchmarks, you cannot delete the defaults.

Enable or Disable Benchmarks

Enabling a benchmark allows you to assign students to that test period. To enable a benchmark:

- 1 Visit the **Benchmark** tab.
- 2 Check the **Enable** button to the right of the benchmark's name.



To disable existing benchmarks, click the **Enable** button again to remove the check. While you can disable **Pending** benchmarks, you cannot disable **In Progress** or **Expired** ones.

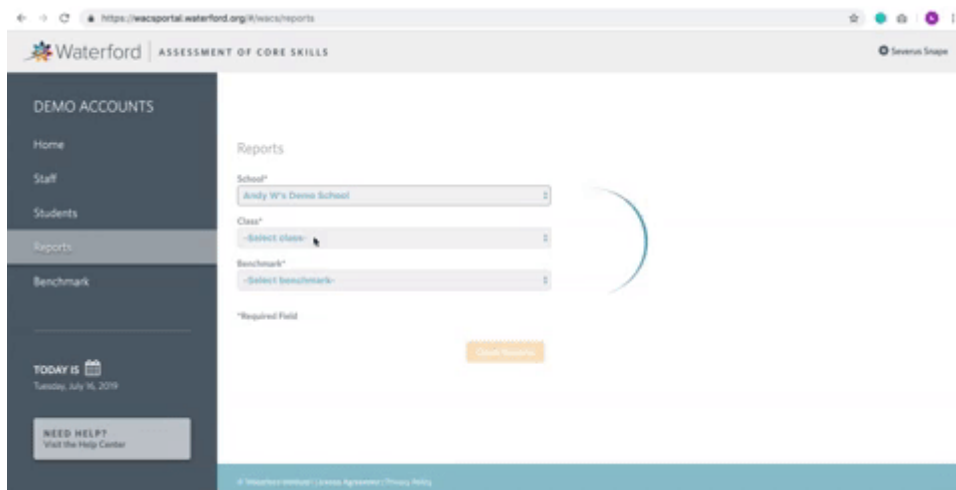
Reports Tab

By clicking on the **Reports** tab, you can view student reports by school, class, and benchmark start/end date.

Select a Report

To select a WACS report:

- 1 Select your **School** and **Class** from the dropdown lists.
- 2 Select a benchmark start and end date.
- 3 Click **Open Reports**.



Current Report Information

WACS currently provides one classroom report, which is color-coded based on individual student scores. It lists all students in alphabetical order and displays the following information by class:

- **Test Date**

- **Score**

- Lists each student's score on individual skill sets as well as their **Overall Score**
- The **Score Key** in the right hand corner displays the following information:

- Score color code

- Green: **At or Above Expected**

- Red: **Below Expected**

- Conversion of numerical scores to grade level

- WACS scores may range from 1000-7000, or **PreK Beginning to 4th Grade Advanced**

- **Average Score**

- This section displays the average score on a skill set for all students in the same grade on the **District, School, and Class** level for comparison to individual students or your entire classroom

- **Expected Score**

- The **Expected Score** row displays the score students should reach, based on their grade level and benchmark period, for a certain skill set

*The **Expected Score** may be blank if the skill set is either above (PreK) or below (K-2nd) a classroom's grade level.*

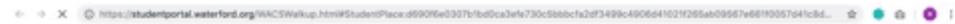
- **Highest** and **Lowest Possible Score** for each skill set

A dash means that the student was not tested on that skill set. The majority of students will have at least several dashes on their score chart.

Setting Up a WACS Test

Once you've assigned your students to a benchmark and initialized their accounts, they can begin the WACS test. To set up a WACS test for your student:

- 1 Visit **Students** tab and click **Drag to Desktop**. This will open up to a student walk-up page similar to Waterford Early Learning, with rows of student picture or initials (if no picture is available).
- 2 Click on the student's picture or initials. A window will open that asks, "Is this you?"
- 3 Choose **Yes** to confirm the student's identity – this will automatically start WACS.



Students must be initialized before they can take the test. If not, after confirming, the test will redirect them back until they have been initialized.

Test Breaks

If a student does not finish their test by the time limit, Wyatt tells them to take a break and the program temporarily shuts down. The student can access the program later to finish the test, but they must complete it within 14 days.

If a student does not complete a test by day 14, it expires and their teacher cannot view their score. The student must be reassessed at a later benchmark.

WACS only gives students 14 days to finish their tests because after that time, a student may have learned new literacy skills or seen external sources, so the test won't be an accurate assessment.