

Update on Washington Auditory Screening Standards Rulemaking Project - Chapter 246-760 WAC

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Key Terms and Abbreviations

- American National Standards Institute (ANSI)
- American Sign Language (ASL)
- Auditory screening equipment (“audiometers” or “pure tone audiometry”)
- Educational Service Districts (ESDs)
- Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
- Otoacoustic emissions (OAEs)
- Revised Code of Washington (RCW)
- State-Tribal Education Compact Schools (STECs)
- Washington Administrative Code (WAC)
- Washington State Board of Health (Board)



Overview

- Project Background and Rulemaking Scope
- Engagement and Work to Date
- Proposed Rule Changes
- Tentative Rulemaking Timeline and Next Steps



Overview and Purpose of Washington Auditory Screening Rules

- Washington law requires that the Board make rules for the yearly hearing screenings done in Washington schools (RCW 28A.210.020).
- Chapter 246-760 WAC outlines the requirements for these screenings.
- Screenings are required for students in kindergarten, grades 1-3, and grades 5 and 7.
- Schools may expand these screenings to other grade levels if resources permit.
- Hearing screenings are a key public health tool for identifying students with hearing difficulties and referring them for follow-up care.

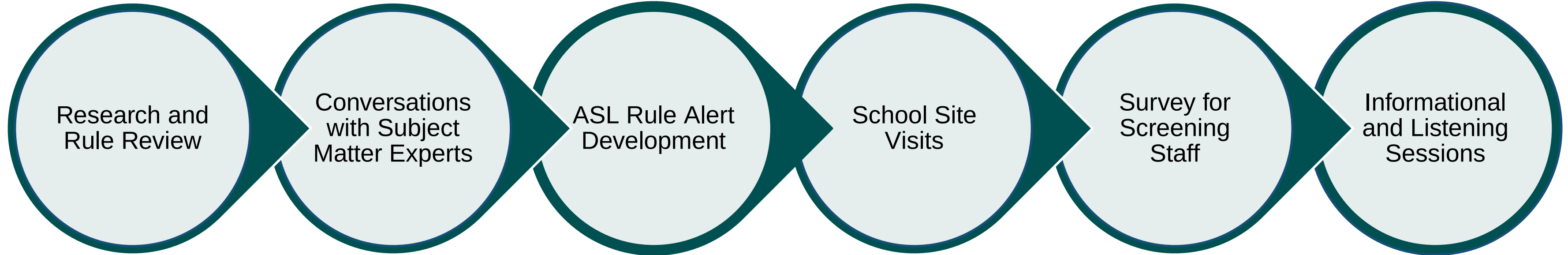


Background and Rulemaking Scope

- The Board received a petition for rulemaking from the Lake Chelan Lion's Club asking to add otoacoustic emission (OAE) screening technology to chapter 246-760 WAC.
- Currently, the Board's hearing screening standards only allow the use of auditory screening equipment ("audiometers" or "pure tone audiometry").
- National guidelines and published research indicate that OAEs are a beneficial screening tool for students unable to participate in pure tone audiometry.
- The hearing sections of chapter 246-760 WAC haven't been updated since 2002 (vision sections were updated in 2017).



Engagement and Work to Date



ASL Rule Alert



Conversations with Subject Matter Experts and Listening Sessions

What We Asked	What We Learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on evidence-based practices and national guidelines for school hearing screening programs. • Screening practices and procedures for students unable to participate in pure tone. • Rationale for using OAE and experience implementing this technology in screening programs. • General thoughts and feedback on proposed rule changes. • Creating more inclusive communications and engaging people who are Deaf or Hard or Hearing in this work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OAEs are commonly used in newborn and early child hearing screenings, but national guidelines and research show they are beneficial in other screening situations. • Many schools in Washington already use OAEs, and several states use them as a backup to pure tone. • Board staff should work with educational audiologists when drafting proposed rule changes. • Advantages and disadvantages of OAEs (e.g., objective screening, costs, equipment maintenance, sensitivity, and frequency differences compared to pure tone) • The impact of deficit-based screening language on community (terms like “hearing loss,” “pass/fail,” “impairment,” etc.).

Screening Staff Survey

What We Asked	Who Responded	What We Learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of school or district • Grade levels screened • Student population • Special practices or procedures used to screen students difficult to screen • OAE as an optional screening tool for hearing screenings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 149 survey responses total <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 90 districts and 59 schools (45 duplicate responses) • 98 out of 295 districts represented in responses. • 1 response from a STEC school • 3 responses from charter schools • 2 responses from private schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most schools and districts only screen students in grade levels required by the rules. • Most schools have students with special learning, developmental, behavioral or other health needs. • Schools use language supports, specialized staff, conditioned play audiometry (CPA) and other methods to screen students. • General support of adding OAE as an <u>optional</u> method, but there are concerns about costs, funding, and staff training.

Proposed Rule Changes

Possible revisions to chapter 246-760 WAC include:

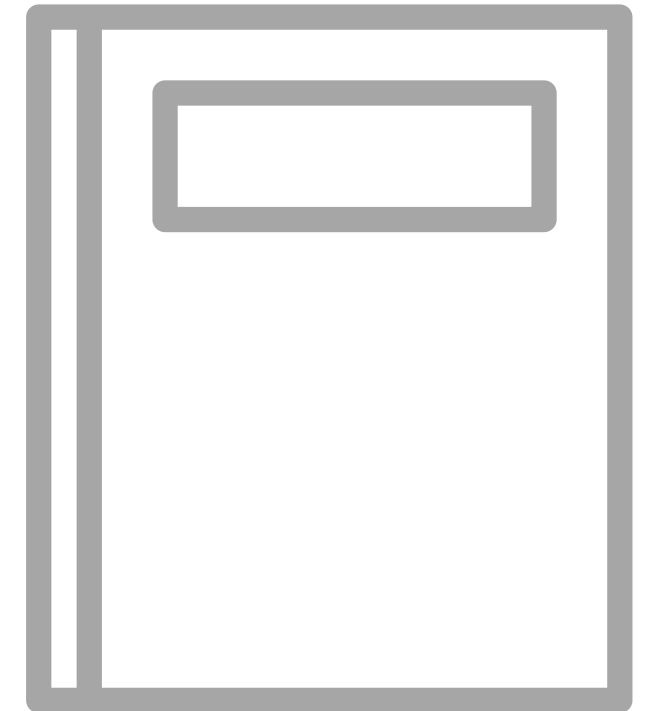
Updating the American National Standards Institute reference in the rule

Including OAE devices as an optional screening technology

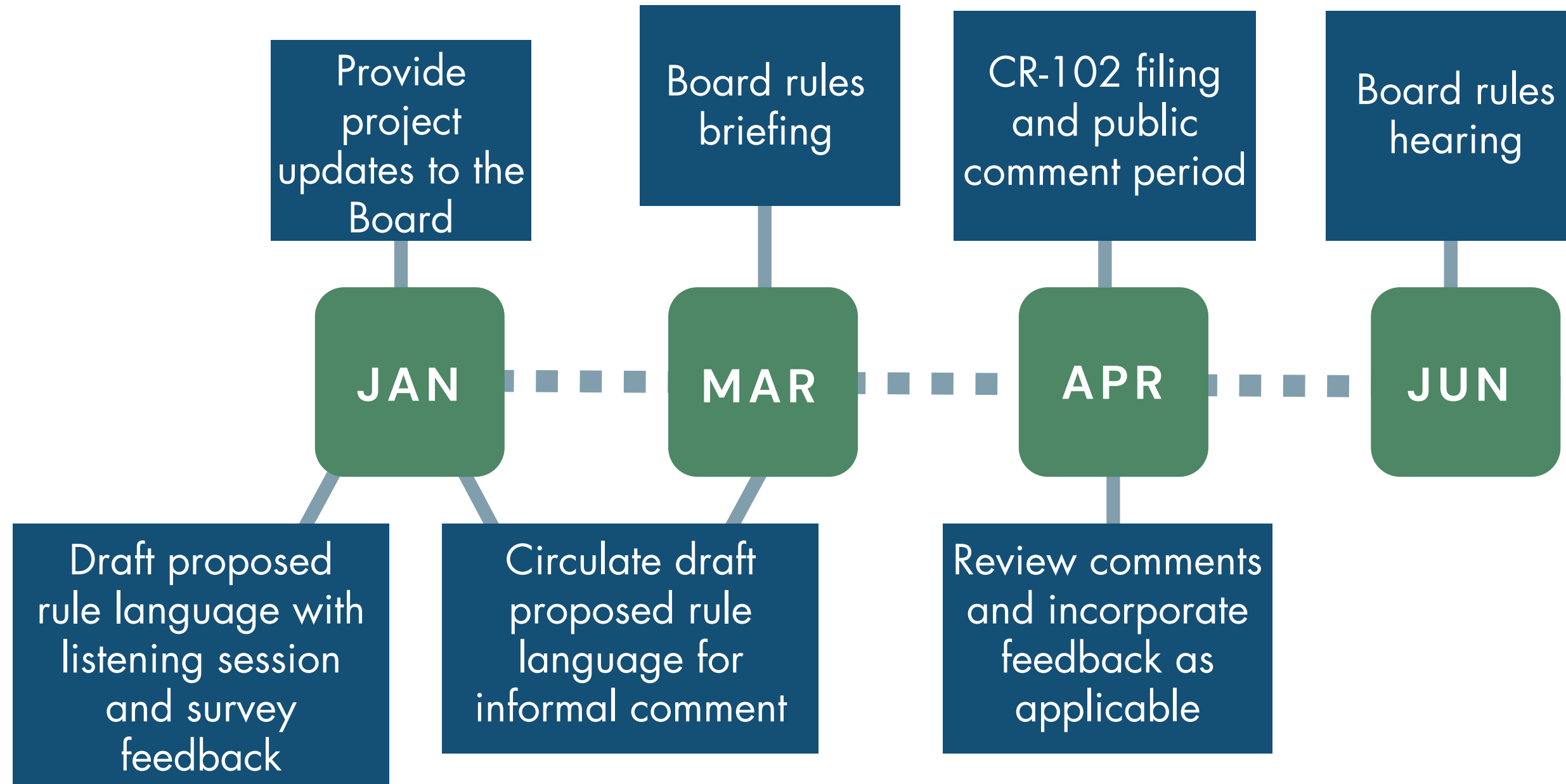
Adding definitions/abbreviations for the auditory screening rule sections

Updating rule language for clarity and removing deficit-based terminology

Rewording rule section titles to match the vision screening sections



Tentative Timeline



THANK YOU

To learn more about this project, email Molly Dinardo at molly.dinardo@sboh.wa.gov

OR

**SCAN
ME!**



To request this document in an alternate format, please contact the Washington State Board of Health by email at wsboh@sboh.wa.gov or by phone at 360-236-4110
TTY users can dial 711

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 - The nature of the accessibility needs
 - The URL (web address) of the content you would like to access
 - Your contact information

We will make every effort to provide you the information requested and correct any compliance issues on our website.

Appendix: Details on Proposed Rule Changes

Possible revisions to chapter 246-760 WAC include:

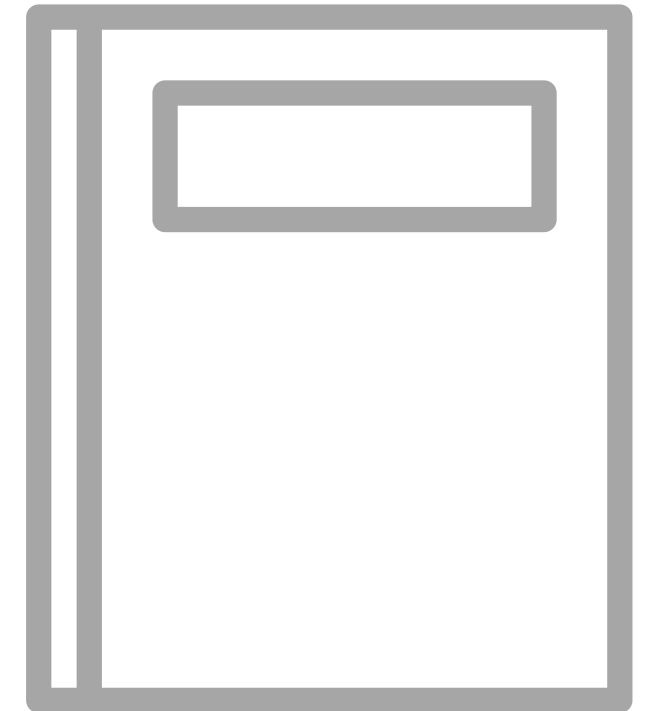
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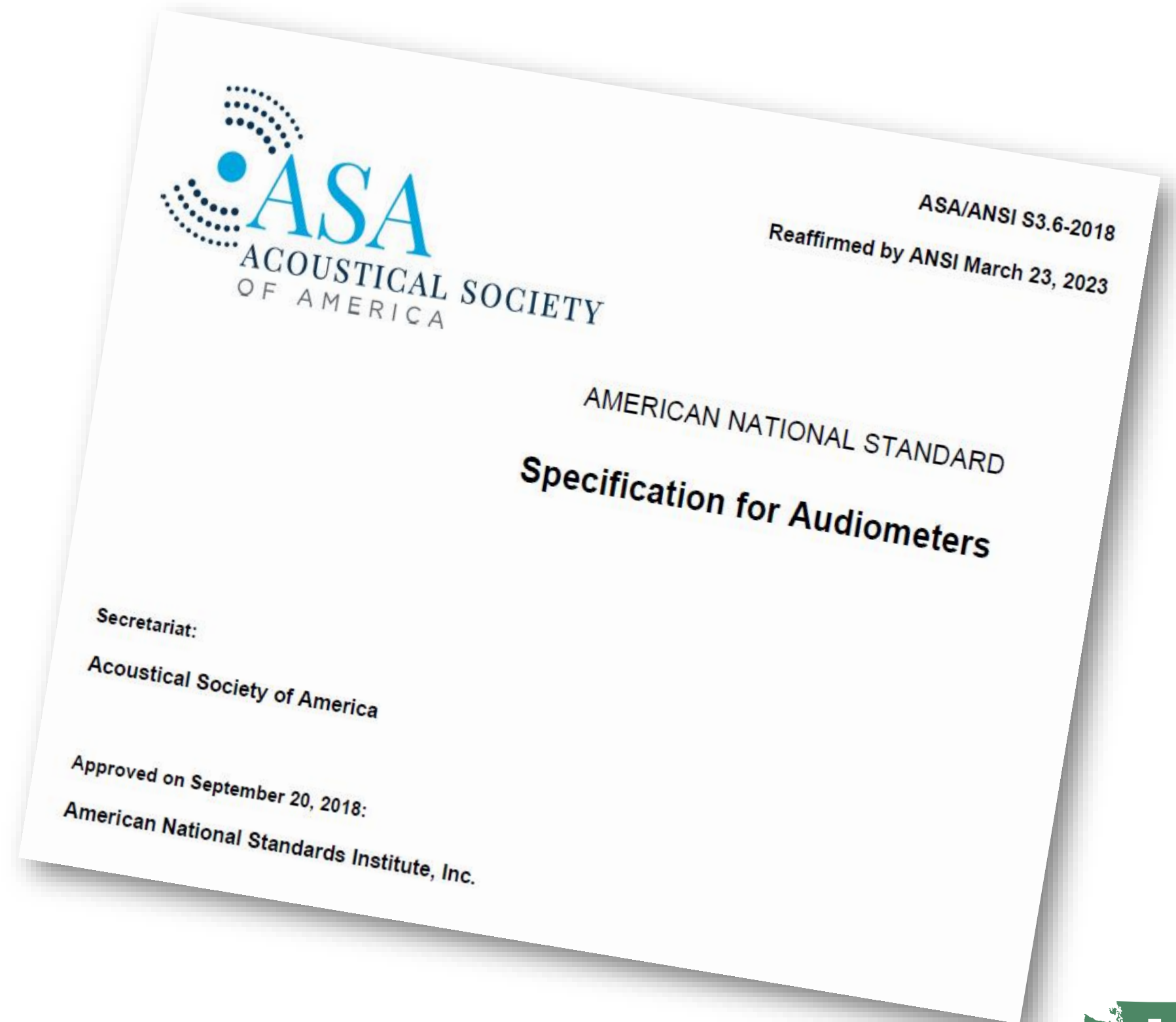
Updating rule language for clarity and removing deficit-based terminology

Rewording rule section titles to match the vision screening sections



Updating ANSI Standards in Rule

- Currently, WAC 246-760-030 references the 1996 American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards for auditory screening equipment.
- **Proposed Changes:**
Update this rule section to include the most recent standards (last updated in 2023).



Including OAE Devices

- Currently, the auditory screening sections of the rule only permit using pure tone audiometry/audiometers.
- **Proposed Changes:**
Under WAC 246-760-030, add OAE devices as an *optional* screening tool. Include new language throughout the hearing screening sections regarding OAE screening procedures, rescreens, and referrals.
- **Considerations:**
 - Rule language should specify when OAEs may be used versus pure tone. (E.g., it is age, developmentally, and linguistically appropriate).
 - OAEs are a new screening tool for many districts; staff will need funding to purchase optional equipment and training for staff on how to use these devices.



Image from the National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management (NCHAM), Utah State University, Early Childhood Hearing Outreach (ECHO) Initiative: [Early Childhood Hearing Screening | NCHAM \(infanthearing.org\)](https://www.infanthearing.org/)

Adding Definitions and Abbreviations

- Currently, WAC 246-760-010 only includes definitions, abbreviations, and acronyms for the vision screening sections of the rule.
- **Proposed Changes:**
Add definitions/abbreviations for the auditory screening sections of the rule.
Examples include:
 - ASA/ANSI Standards
 - Audiometer
 - Audiological evaluation
 - Auditory acuity
 - Calibrate
 - Otoacoustic emission (OAE) devices

Updating and Adding Language for Clarity and Inclusivity

- Currently, the auditory screening sections of the rule are not aligned with the vision screening sections.
- The rule currently doesn't include language around students who may not need to be included in the hearing screens.
- Some sections of the rule regarding rescreening and referral procedures are vague and could benefit from additional clarity.
- Additionally, staff learned from conversations with people in the Deaf community that terminology like “loss,” “fail,” and “impairment” is deficit-based and does not reflect that children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing are equal, healthy, and whole.
- **Proposed Changes:**
 - Amend auditory screening sections to better align with vision screening sections (e.g., add a new section specific to auditory screening, like WAC-760-070.)
 - Add language to clarify students who are not required to have hearing screens (students with prior hearing accommodations).
 - Specify the rescreening timeframe in WAC 246-760-050 from “within 6 weeks” to “within 2-6 weeks.”
 - Update rule language to remove terms around “pass/fail,” “impairment,” and “loss.”

Rewording Rule Section Titles

- Currently, titles for the auditory screening sections are phrased as questions; the vision screening sections are not.
- **Proposed Changes:**
 - Update the auditory screening section titles to improve readability and align with the vision screening sections.