



State of Arizona
Department of Education
Office of John Huppenthal
Superintendent of Public Instruction

November 3, 2014

Dear Parents,

Thank you for all you do to support your children in their academic development. Arizona's educators also are working diligently to improve every student's academic achievements. We want every child to have the tools necessary to be successful in their future endeavors.

Continuing to ensure that all Arizona children have the opportunity to succeed, the Arizona State Board of Education (Board) has announced a new assessment to replace the AIMS Reading, Writing and Mathematics tests beginning spring 2015. The Board voted and approved that American Institutes for Research (AIR) will provide Arizona's New Assessment, AzMERIT - Arizona's Measurement of Educational Readiness to Inform Teaching.

Arizona public school students in Grades 3 through high school will take AzMERIT in English Language Arts and Mathematics. Students in Grades 4, 8, and high school will still take the AIMS Science test.

Students in Grades 3 through 8 will take AzMERIT in English Language Arts and Mathematics at their grade level. Students taking high school level English Language Arts and Mathematics will take AzMERIT End-of-Course assessments that will test their proficiency in these subjects near the end of the course.

High school students graduating after December 31, 2016 will **no longer be required to pass the AIMS test to graduate high school**. Students will not be required to pass the End-of-Course tests for graduation, but they must still earn the minimum number of English and Mathematics credits in order to graduate.

Features of AzMERIT:

- **Uniquely Arizona exams** - These exams will be aligned to Arizona's English Language Arts and Mathematics standards. Standards are the expectations of what every child should be able to do at each grade level. Arizona will control the decision making for all aspects of the exams



including test design, test and item content, scoring, and reporting. Arizona educators will have extensive involvement.

- **Commitment to student privacy** - AIR has demonstrated the ability and commitment to comply with all Arizona laws regarding student privacy, the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), the Federal Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA).
- **Better able to measure students’ readiness for the future** - These new exams will offer computer-based tools which will better measure students’ mastery of the standards including problem solving and critical-thinking skills. Paper-based exams will be available for schools that are not ready to take the exam via computer. Student test scores will be comparable regardless of the testing format.
- **Least Disruptive** - AzMERIT has similar testing times and windows as the AIMS test. That means students will test for about 7 hours across multiple days during April.

The Board must still make decisions about how the results of AzMERIT will be used and in particular how the **Move on When Reading** requirement will be affected. The Board is expected to discuss the establishment of a “safe harbor” year, meaning the Board may vote not to hold back third graders based on their reading scores on the AzMERIT for school year 2014-2015.

ADE is currently in discussions with AIR and will share more details about the test, including testing windows and timelines in the coming days and weeks.

While your school and, most specifically, your teacher are the best sources for information, you may find additional information on ADE’s website at www.azed.gov/AzMERIT.

Jennifer Johnson, Ed.D.

Deputy Superintendent of Programs and Policy
Arizona Department of Education

