

AZMERIT TOOLKIT FOR SCHOOLS & DISTRICTS

UPDATED MARCH 2015



Expect More Arizona[®]
THE MOVEMENT FOR
WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION



Expect More Arizona developed this communications toolkit in partnership with the Arizona Public Engagement Task Force to help schools and districts communicate with parents about the new AzMERIT test. Please use the content in this document however you see fit and modify it according to the specific details about testing at your school. Contact us if you have any questions on the content or how to use it.

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Questions? Contact Christie Silverstein at Expect More Arizona at christie@expectmorearizona.org or (602) 648-6616.

I. EMAIL/LETTER TO PARENTS

ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE SCHOOL COMPUTER-BASED TEST

Dear Parents & Families,

Thank you for all you do to support your child's academic success! As you may know, AzMERIT testing will begin at the end of this month and we wanted to provide you more information about what to expect. AzMERIT is like an annual checkup – an important opportunity to find out how your child is doing. Just as doctors check height and weight, teachers use the test to check how your child is doing in English and math.

The AzMERIT assessment will be administered to all students in 3rd through 8th grade. Students in 4th and 8th grade will also take AIMS Science.

These statewide tests are untimed and your child will be given as much time as needed to complete each portion. Estimated times for how long each section might take are included below.

AzMERIT replaces AIMS for reading, writing, and math. The AzMERIT test was selected because it goes beyond multiple choice questions to provide a better indicator of what students have learned during the school year. AzMERIT is also shorter than AIMS, which means your student will spend less time taking state tests than in previous years. Ultimately, AzMERIT will allow for score reporting by the end of the school year. However, the initial results from this year's test are not expected to be available until fall 2015, with future test results being available much more quickly.

- **Writing:** The writing portion will require students to read a few passages and then write about them. This type of task requires students to think deeper about topics and use evidence to support their thinking. *Students will be taking the writing tests from [date range]. It will take an average of 45-90 minutes to complete the writing portion.*
- **Reading:** The reading portion will be administered in two parts over the course of two days. This will ensure students have ample time to read and answer questions. The test also contains editing tasks to measure student understanding of fundamental skills like spelling and grammar. *Students will be taking the reading portions of AzMERIT from [date range]. Each part of the test will take students an average of 45-75 minutes to complete.*
- **Math:** The math portion will be administered in two parts over the course of two days. This will ensure students have ample time to read and answer questions. The test will ask questions that check a student's conceptual understanding of math, as well as their procedural skills. *Students will be taking the math portions of AzMERIT from [date range]. Each part of the test will take students an average of 60-85 minutes to complete.*
- **AIMS Science:** Only students in fourth and eighth grades will take the AIMS Science test, which is a multiple choice test that is not timed. *Fourth graders will take the AIMS Science test on [date(s)] and eighth graders will take the AIMS Science test on [date(s)].*

All AzMERIT testing at [name of school] will be given electronically on school provided computers. [Include information about additional resources the students may need to bring – calculators, headphones].

The best way for your child to prepare for the new test is already happening in the classroom all year

round with projects, assignments and discussions that teach critical thinking and problem solving skills. However it is important to talk with your child about the new assessment – your conversations can help minimize any fear or anxiety your child may be feeling. Additionally, you can take a practice test with your child at home to become more familiar with the format and types of questions that will be asked.

To learn more about the test and what your child needs to know to be successful visit ArizonaAimsHigher.org/AzMERIT.

Please help make sure your child arrives on time and is well-rested during testing days. We appreciate your patience, cooperation and flexibility during this testing administration time.

Sincerely,
[name]
Principal

ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE SCHOOL PAPER-BASED TEST

Dear Parents & Families,

Thank you for all you do to support your child's academic success! As you may know, AzMERIT testing will begin at the end of this month and we wanted to provide you more information about what to expect. AzMERIT is like an annual checkup – an important opportunity to find out how your child is doing. Just as doctors check height and weight, teachers use the test to check how your child is doing in English and math.

The AzMERIT assessment will be administered to all students in 3rd through 8th grade. Students in 4th and 8th grade will also take AIMS Science.

These statewide tests are untimed and your child will be given as much time as needed to complete each portion. Estimated times for how long each section might take are included below.

AzMERIT replaces AIMS for reading, writing, and math. The AzMERIT test was selected because it goes beyond multiple choice questions to provide a better indicator of what students have learned during the school year. AzMERIT is also shorter than AIMS, which means your student will spend less time taking state tests than in previous years. Ultimately, AzMERIT will allow for score reporting by the end of the school year. However, the initial results from this year's test are not expected to be available until fall 2015, with future test results being available much more quickly.

- **Writing:** The writing portion will require students to read a few passages and then write about them. This type of task requires students to think deeper about topics and use evidence to support their thinking. *Students will be taking the writing tests from [date range]. It will take an average of 45-90 minutes to complete the writing portion.*
- **Reading:** The reading portion will be administered in two parts over the course of two days. This will ensure students have ample time to read and answer questions. The test also contains editing tasks to measure student understanding of fundamental skills like spelling and grammar. *Students will be taking the reading portions of AzMERIT from [date range]. Each part of the test will take students an average of 45-75 minutes to complete.*

- **Math:** The math portion will be administered in two parts over the course of two days. This will ensure students have ample time to read and answer questions. The test will ask questions that check a student's conceptual understanding of math, as well as their procedural skills. *Students will be taking the math portions of AzMERIT from [date range]. Each part of the test will take students an average of 60-85 minutes to complete.*

All AzMERIT testing at [name of school] will be given via paper and pencil. We hope to be able to provide the online test in future years.

The best way for your child to prepare for the new test is already happening in the classroom all year round with projects, assignments and discussions that teach critical thinking and problem solving skills. However it is important to talk with your child about the new assessment – your conversations can help minimize any fear or anxiety your child may be feeling. Additionally, you can take a practice test with your child at home to become more familiar with the format and types of questions that will be asked.

To learn more about the test and what your child needs to know to be successful visit ArizonaAimsHigher.org/AzMERIT.

Please help make sure your child arrives on time and is well-rested during testing days. We appreciate your patience, cooperation and flexibility during this testing administration time.

Sincerely,
[name]
Principal

HIGH SCHOOL COMPUTER-BASED TEST

Dear Parents & Families,

Thank you for all you do to support your child's academic success! As you may know, AzMERIT testing will begin at the end of this month and we wanted to provide you more information about what to expect. AzMERIT is like an annual checkup – an important opportunity to find out how your child is doing. Just as doctors check height and weight, teachers use the test to check how your child is doing in English and math.

AzMERIT replaces AIMS for reading, writing, and math. All high school students will take AzMERIT end-of-course tests in English Language Arts (ELA) and math that will test their proficiency in both subjects.

AzMERIT end-of-course tests are administered to those students enrolled in ELA 9, ELA 10, ELA 11, and Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II. The ELA tests include a writing portion and a reading portion. Ninth or tenth graders will still take the AIMS Science test at the end of a biology course.

These statewide tests are untimed and your child will be given as much time as needed to complete each portion. Estimated times for how long each section might take are included below.

Passing AzMERIT is not a requirement for high school graduation. Additionally, as of last month, juniors and seniors who did not originally pass AIMS will not be required to retake the AIMS test in order to graduate.

The AzMERIT test was selected by the Arizona State Board of Education because it goes beyond multiple choice questions to provide a better indicator of what students have learned during the school year.

Ultimately, AzMERIT will allow for score reporting by the end of the school year. However, the initial results from this year's test are not expected to be available until fall 2015, with future test results being available much more quickly.

- **Writing:** The writing portion will require students to read a few passages and then write about them. This type of task requires students to think deeper about topics and use evidence to support their thinking. *Students will be taking the writing tests from [date range]. It will take an average of 45-90 minutes to complete the writing portion.*
- **Reading:** The reading portion will be administered in two parts over the course of one to two days. This will ensure students have ample time to read and answer questions. The test also contains editing tasks to measure student understanding of fundamental skills like spelling and grammar. *Students will be taking the reading portions of AzMERIT from [date range]. Each part of the test will take students an average of 45-75 minutes to complete.*
- **Math:** The math portion will be administered in two parts over the course of one to two days. This will ensure students have ample time to read and answer questions. The test will ask questions that check a student's conceptual understanding of math, as well as their procedural skills. *Students will be taking the math portions of AzMERIT from [date range]. Each part of the test will take students an average of 50-85 minutes to complete.*

All AzMERIT testing at [name of school] will be given electronically on school provided computers. [Include information about additional resources the students may need to bring – calculators, headphones].

All of the work your child has been doing in the classroom to this point has helped prepare him/her for this test. Every project, assignment and discussion has helped teach your child critical thinking and problem solving skills. However, it is important to talk with your child about the new assessment to help minimize any fear or anxiety your child may be feeling. You can even take a practice test with your child at home to become more familiar with the format and types of questions that will be asked.

To learn more about the test and what your child needs to know to be successful at ArizonaAimsHigher.org/AzMERIT.

Please help make sure your child arrives on time and well-rested during testing days. We appreciate your patience, cooperation and flexibility during this testing administration time.

Sincerely,
[name]
Principal

HIGH SCHOOL PAPER-BASED TEST

Dear Parents & Families,

Thank you for all you do to support your child's academic success! As you may know, AzMERIT testing will begin at the end of this month and we wanted to provide you more information about what to expect. AzMERIT is like an annual checkup – an important opportunity to find out how your child is doing. Just as doctors check height and weight, teachers use the test to check how your child is doing in English and math.

AzMERIT replaces AIMS for reading, writing, and math. All high school students will take AzMERIT end-of-course tests in English Language Arts (ELA) and math that will test their proficiency in both subjects.

AzMERIT end-of-course tests are administered to those students enrolled in ELA 9, ELA 10, ELA 11, and Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II. The ELA tests include a writing portion and a reading portion. Ninth or tenth graders will still take the AIMS Science test at the end of a biology course.

These statewide tests are untimed and your child will be given as much time as needed to complete each portion. Estimated times for how long each section might take are included below. Passing AzMERIT is not a requirement for high school graduation. Additionally, as of last month, juniors and seniors who did not originally pass AIMS will not be required to retake the AIMS test in order to graduate.

The AzMERIT test was selected by the Arizona State Board of Education because it goes beyond multiple choice questions to provide a better indicator of what students have learned during the school year. Ultimately, AzMERIT will allow for score reporting by the end of the school year. However, the initial results from this year's test are not expected to be available until fall 2015, with future test results being available much more quickly.

- **Writing:** The writing portion will require students to read a few passages and then write about them. This type of task requires students to think deeper about topics and use evidence to support their thinking. *Students will be taking the writing tests from [date range]. It will take an average of 45-90 minutes to complete the writing portion.*
- **Reading:** The reading portion will be administered in two parts over the course of one to two days. This will ensure students have ample time to read and answer questions. The test also contains editing tasks to measure student understanding of fundamental skills like spelling and grammar. *Students will be taking the reading portions of AzMERIT from [date range]. Each part of the test will take students an average of 45-75 minutes to complete.*
- **Math:** The math portion will be administered in two parts over the course of one to two days. This will ensure students have ample time to read and answer questions. The test will ask questions that check a student's conceptual understanding of math, as well as their procedural skills. *Students will be taking the math portions of AzMERIT from [date range]. Each part of the test will take students an average of 50-85 minutes to complete.*

AzMERIT testing at [name of school] will be given via paper and pencil. We hope to be able to provide the online test in future years.

All of the work your child has been doing in the classroom to this point has helped prepare him/her for this test. Every project, assignment and discussion has helped teach your child critical thinking and problem solving skills. However, it is important to talk with your child about the new assessment to help minimize any fear or anxiety your child may be feeling. You can even take a practice test with your child at home to become more familiar with the format and types of questions that will be asked.

To learn more about the test and what your child needs to know to be successful at ArizonaAimsHigher.org/AzMERIT.

Please help make sure your child arrives on time and well-rested during testing days. We appreciate

your patience, cooperation and flexibility during this testing administration time.

Sincerely,
[name]
Principal

ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE SCHOOL COMPUTER-BASED TEST IN SPANISH

Estimados Padres de Familia:

Les agradecemos todo lo que hacen por apoyar el desarrollo académico de sus hijos. Como quizás ustedes sepan, las pruebas AzMERIT comenzarán a finales de este mes, por lo cual nosotros deseamos proveerles más información con respecto a qué pueden esperar. Las evaluaciones AzMERIT serán administradas a todos los estudiantes del 3^{er} al 8^o grado. Los estudiantes de 4^o y 8^o grados también tomarán la prueba AIMS en Ciencias.

Estas pruebas a nivel estatal no tienen un límite de tiempo, y se dará a sus hijos tanto tiempo como lo necesitan para completar cada porción. Los tiempos calculados con respecto a cuánto tiempo se tomará cada sección están incluidos abajo.

La prueba AzMERIT reemplaza a la prueba AIMS en lectura, escritura, y matemáticas. La prueba AzMERIT fue seleccionada porque va más allá de preguntas con múltiples opciones, con el fin de proveer un mejor indicador de lo que los estudiantes han aprendido durante el año escolar. La prueba AzMERIT también es más corta que la prueba AIMS. Esto significa que su estudiante pasará menos tiempo tomando pruebas estatales que en años previos. Por último, la prueba AzMERIT permitirá el reportaje de calificaciones para finales del año escolar. Sin embargo, los resultados del año inicial serán retrasados y se espera que estén disponibles para el otoño de 2015.

- **Escritura:** La porción de escritura requerirá que los estudiantes lean unos cuantos pasajes y que después escriban sobre ellos. Este tipo de tarea requiere que los estudiantes piensen más profundamente sobre los temas y que usen la evidencia para apoyar su proceso mental. *Los estudiantes tomarán las pruebas por escrito entre [date range]. Les tomará en promedio de 45 a 90 minutos completar la porción de escritura.*
- **Lectura:** La porción de lectura será administrada en dos partes durante el curso de dos días. Esto asegurará que los estudiantes tengan suficiente tiempo para leer y contestar las preguntas. La prueba también contendrá tareas de edición para medir el entendimiento del estudiante de habilidades fundamentales como ortografía y gramática. *Los estudiantes tomarán las porciones de lectura de AzMERIT entre [date range]. Cada parte de la prueba les tomará a los estudiantes en promedio de 45 a 75 minutos para completarla.*
- **Matemáticas:** La porción de matemáticas será administrada en dos partes durante el curso de dos días. Esto asegurará que los estudiantes tengan suficiente tiempo para leer y contestar las preguntas. La prueba hará preguntas que revisan el entendimiento conceptual del estudiante con respecto a las matemáticas, así como sus habilidades en procedimientos. *Los estudiantes tomarán las porciones de matemáticas de las pruebas AzMERIT entre [date range]. Cada parte de la prueba les tomará a los estudiantes en promedio de 60 a 85 minutos para completarla.*

- **Prueba AIMS de Ciencias:** Sólo los estudiantes en el cuarto y octavo grados tomarán la prueba AIMS de Ciencias, la cual es una prueba con múltiples opciones que no tiene límite de tiempo. *Los estudiantes de cuarto grado tomarán la prueba AIMS de Ciencias en **[date(s)]** y los estudiantes de octavo grado tomarán la prueba AIMS de Ciencias en **[date(s)]**.*

Todas las pruebas AzMERIT en la escuela **[name of school]** se administrarán electrónicamente en las computadoras que proveerá la escuela. ***[Include information about additional resources the students may need to bring – calculators, headphones].***

La mejor forma para que se preparen sus hijos para la nueva prueba ya está sucediendo en el salón de clases durante todo el año, con proyectos, tareas y pláticas que enseñan el pensamiento crítico y las habilidades de resolución de problemas. Sin embargo, es importante que hablen con sus hijos sobre la nueva evaluación – sus conversaciones pueden ayudar a minimizar cualquier miedo o ansiedad que sus hijos puedan estar sintiendo. Además, ustedes pueden tomar una prueba de práctica con sus hijos en el hogar para familiarizarse mejor con el formato y los tipos de preguntas que se les harán.

Para aprender más sobre la prueba y lo que sus hijos necesitan saber para tener éxito, visiten ArizonaAimsHigher.org/AzMERIT.

Por favor ayuden a asegurar que sus hijos lleguen a tiempo y bien descansados durante los días de las pruebas. Apreciamos su paciencia, cooperación y flexibilidad durante este tiempo de administración de pruebas.

Atentamente,

[name]

[Female] Directora

[Male] Director

II. SCHOOL WEBSITE COPY

A New Test to Replace AIMS in reading, writing and math.

Learn about AzMERIT and what it means for your child.

What is AzMERIT?

The new AzMERIT test is being developed by Arizona educators to give teachers a better idea of how students are doing in reading, writing and math.

Why do we need a test?

AzMERIT is like an annual checkup – an important opportunity to find out how your child is doing. Just as doctors check height and weight, teachers use the test to check how your child is doing in reading, writing and math.

Who takes the tests?

Students in 3rd grade through high school will take the AzMERIT test this spring. High school students will be given at the end of their courses, similar to a final exam.

How do I help my child prepare?

All of the work your child has been doing in the classroom this year has helped prepare him/her for this test. Every project, assignment and discussion has helped teach your child critical thinking and problem solving skills.

As a parent, one of the most important things you can do is to talk with your child about the new assessment to help minimize any fear or anxiety your child may be feeling. You can even take a practice test with your child at home to become more familiar with the format and types of questions that will be asked. Another important thing you can do, is to check in regularly with your child's teacher about his/her progress to see where your child needs more help or where he/she is ready to learn even more.

Learn more about the test and what your child needs to know to be successful at

ArizonaAimsHigher.org/AzMERIT.

III. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does AzMERIT mean for students?

AzMERIT replaces AIMS in reading, writing, and math and is not timed. AzMERIT goes beyond multiple choice questions to provide a better indicator of what students have learned during the school year. AzMERIT will allow for faster score reporting for schools taking the test online. However, the initial results from this year's test are not expected to be available until fall 2015, with future test results being available much more quickly.

Students in 3rd through 8th grade will take AzMERIT in English Language Arts and Math at their grade level. In high school, students will take AzMERIT end-of-course tests in English Language Arts and Math. AzMERIT will be administered to high school students enrolled in English classes in 9th through 11th grade, and Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II.

AIMS Science will still be administered to students in 4th and 8th grade, and in high school at the end of a biology course.

What will the tests be like?

- **Writing:** The writing portion will require students to read a few passages and then write about them. This type of task requires students to think deeper about topics and use evidence to support their thinking. *Students will be taking the writing tests from [date range]. It will take an average of 45-90 minutes to complete the writing portion.*
- **Reading:** The reading portion will be administered in two parts over the course of one to two days. This will ensure students have ample time to read and answer questions. The test also contain editing tasks to measure student understanding of fundamental skills like spelling and grammar. *Students will be taking the reading portions of AzMERIT from [date range]. Each part of the test will take students an average of 45-75 minutes to complete.*
- **Math:** The math portion will be administered in two parts over the course of one to two days. This will ensure students have ample time to read and answer questions. The test will ask questions that check a student's conceptual understanding of math, as well as their procedural skills. *Students will be taking the math portions of AzMERIT from [date range]. Each part of the test will take students an average of 50-85 minutes to complete.*
- **AIMS Science:** the AIMS Science test will be administered to students in 4th and 8th grade, and in 9th or 10th grade at the end of a biology course. It is a multiple choice test that is not timed and ranges from 54-65 questions depending on the grade level of the student.

When will students take AzMERIT?

AzMERIT is administered during a testing window in the spring semester, which runs from March 30 – May 6 for the computer-based tests and April 13 – April 24 for the paper and pencil tests. The writing portion must be completed by April 24. Check with your school or child's teacher for testing dates, times, and other specific test administration information.

Will my child take the test on a computer or paper? [Choose which response fits your district/school]

- All students at [school district name] will take the AzMERIT test via paper and pencil this year.
- All students at [school district name] will take the computer-based version of AzMERIT this year
- Students attending [list schools] will take the computer-based assessment. Students attending [list schools] will take the AzMERIT test via paper and pencil this year.

Will my high school student need to pass AzMERIT to graduate?

Students will not be required to pass the assessment for graduation. As of Feb. 20, current juniors and seniors do not need to pass AIMS to graduate. Beginning with the class of 2017, all students will need to pass a civics test for graduation.

What are the benefits of a new assessment?

With the new test, parents will know if their child is on track academically or is falling behind. Students will know if they are prepared for the next grade and if they are on track for college and career. They will also have a chance to show their critical-thinking skills by applying concepts and showing deeper understanding of a topic.

Will scores on the new test look different?

The new tests will set a more realistic benchmark for student performance. Because we have a completely new test, scores will look different and may be lower than before; however, this doesn't mean that our students are doing worse. Instead, the scores will provide a more accurate view of how our students are performing. Both students and teachers will need time to adjust to the new assessment. With time and support, we know Arizona students will rise to the challenge.

IV. PHONE MESSAGE FROM ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE SCHOOL

Hi, its [Principal *name*] from [school]. As you may know, AzMERIT testing will begin soon in our schools. The purpose of this call is to provide you more information about what to expect with the new assessment. The AzMERIT assessment will be administered to all students in 3rd through 8th grade starting on March 30 [*insert your timeline*].

AzMERIT replaces AIMS for reading, writing, and math. AzMERIT goes beyond multiple choice questions, which means that the test results provide a better indicator of what students have learned during the school year. AzMERIT is also shorter than AIMS for elementary and middle school students, which means your child will spend less time taking state tests than in previous years.

All AzMERIT testing will be given [*insert information on your process*] electronically on school provided computers. [*Include information about additional resources the students may need to bring – calculators, headphones*].

Fourth and eighth graders will also be taking AIMS Science next month.

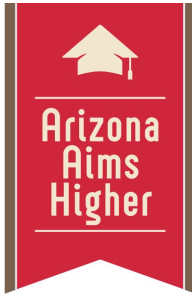
Please help make sure your child arrives on time and is well-rested during testing days. We appreciate your patience, cooperation and flexibility during this testing administration time.

For more information about test days and tips to help your child prepare, visit our school website [*at schoolwebsite.org*].

V. SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

- Is your child nervous for the AzMERIT exam? Find sample test questions at: <http://bit.ly/AzTest#AZAimsHigher>
- Have a question about the new AzMERIT test? Check out these FAQ to see if they can help answer it: <http://bit.ly/AZtestFAQ#AZAimsHigher>
- Sure, it's still a test. But the new AzMERIT will do a better job of supporting your child's learning. <http://bit.ly/AzTest#AZAimsHigher>

VI. SAMPLE PRINT AD



APPOINTMENT REMINDER:

Your child's academic checkup is around the corner.



The AzMERIT test is an annual checkup – an important opportunity to find out how your child is doing in school. Just like a doctor would check your child's height and weight, a teacher will use AzMERIT to see how your child is doing in reading, writing and math.

Learn more about the AzMERIT test and how to help your child prepare at ArizonaAimsHigher.org/AzMERIT.



VII. KEY TALKING POINTS

- It's time for our students' academic checkup! Students in third grade through high school will begin taking AzMERIT at the end of this month. For high school students, the new assessments will be given at the end of English and math courses, similar to a final exam.
- AzMERIT testing window runs from March 30 through May 6 for the computer-based tests and April 13 through April 24 for the paper and pencil tests.
- AzMERIT replaces AIMS for reading, writing, and math. The new test goes beyond multiple choice questions, and will allow students to better demonstrate what they have learned during the school year.
- AzMERIT is shorter than AIMS for 3rd through 8th graders, which means students will spend less time taking state tests than in previous years.
- High school students WILL NO LONGER have to pass the tests to graduate from high school. As of last month, juniors and seniors who did not originally pass AIMS will not be required to retake the AIMS test.
- AzMERIT is untimed and your child will be given as much time as needed to complete each portion. AzMERIT includes a writing portion, two reading portions and two math portions. Each student will be tested over the course of 2-3 days.
- With the new test, parents will know if their child is on track academically or is falling behind. Students will know if they are prepared for the next grade and if they are on track for college and career. They will also have a chance to show their critical-thinking skills by applying concepts and showing deeper understanding of a topic.
- School districts and charter schools can choose to administer the assessment via pencil/paper or on a computer. Check with your children's school to see how they are planning to give the test this year. Approximately 40% of schools statewide will be administering the test online.
- Ultimately, AzMERIT will allow for faster score reporting. However, the initial results from this year's test are not expected to be available until fall 2015, with future test results being available much more quickly.
- Students test data is protected by a number of state and federal laws. Personal student data has never been, and never will be, shared with the federal government.
- The new tests will set a more realistic benchmark for student performance. Because we have a completely new test, scores will look different and may be lower than before; however, this doesn't mean that our students are doing worse. Instead, the scores will provide a more accurate view of how our students are performing.
- Both students and teachers will need time to adjust to the new assessment. With time and support, we know Arizona students will rise to the challenge.

- Recently, a new law was adopted [*the bill is pending the Governor's signature this week*] to provide students, teachers and schools with a two-year transition period to adjust to the new AzMERIT exam. Our state's accountability system will be placed on hold, although the data will still be available for parents and teachers to know how students performed overall.
- All of the work your child has been doing in the classroom to this point has helped prepare him/her for this test. Every project, assignment and discussion has helped teach your child develop critical thinking and problem solving skills.
- However it is important to talk with your child about the new assessment to help minimize any fear or anxiety your child may be feeling. Additionally, you can take a practice test with your child at home to become more familiar with the format and types of questions that will be asked.
- Learn more about the test and what your child needs to know to be successful at ArizonaAimsHigher.org/AzMERIT.

VIII. BLOG POST/NEWSLETTER COPY

Top 8 Tips for Helping Your Child Prepare for AzMERIT

Spring has arrived, which means we're already nearing the end of another school year in Arizona. It's time to measure what students have learned and if they are on track and prepared for the next step in their education. This year, Arizona students will be taking a brand new test, called AzMERIT.

Think of the test as an academic checkup. Just as you would want your doctor to share an honest assessment of your child's health, AzMERIT will give you the most accurate information about your child's academic ability.

We know that taking tests can be stressful and students can experience every emotion from panic to apathy. It is important your child is mentally and physically prepared and there are simple ways to alleviate anxiety and stress.

1) **Talk to Your Child's Teacher**

Teachers are an excellent resource for details about the skills your child has been working on this school year and what support you can give your child at home to help him prepare for the test.

2) **Reinforce Critical Thinking Skills**

Your child has been preparing for the new test since the school year began. All of the projects, assignments and discussions have reinforced critical thinking and problem solving skills. However, you can reinforce those skills at home by reading with your child and asking her to talk about the central idea or theme of book or article. Ask her to explain something she has written. Have her explain the steps she took to solve a math problem.

3) **Practice At Home**

You can support your child by learning about the skills being assessed on the test, as well as what sample questions might look like and talking with him about it. If your child will be taking the test on a computer, it would be useful to go through some sample questions so he is familiar with the platform.

4) **Keep Track of Test Days**

If you know when the tests are coming, you can make sure other activities are kept to a minimum. Ensure school takes priority over practices, appointments and trips.

5) **Serve a Healthy Breakfast**

Research has shown the impact eating breakfast has on academic performance. Focus on foods that are healthy and a source of energy, like eggs and whole grain toast, or oatmeal packed with fruit and nuts. Less healthy choices such as donuts and sugary drinks can leave your student feeling tired and hungry just an hour or two later. A nutritious breakfast will help your child stay focused and alert.

6) **Safeguard Sleep**

Make sure your student gets enough sleep the night before exams and in the days leading up to tests. Enforce a "tech curfew" – no phones, tablets, video games, or TV for 30 minutes prior to bedtime. This will help your child wind down and prepare to get a good night's rest.

7) **Don't Stress**

Your stress can carry over to your student. By keeping your own stress levels down, you can help your child succeed. Try to emphasize to your child that she doesn't have to be perfect, and that you'll support her no matter what.

8) Stay Positive

Your child can be influenced by your reaction to testing time. Give him a positive send-off in the morning and tell him he has the needed skills, he just needs to relax and pace himself.

Remember, AzMERIT and other standardized tests are not the finish line. They simply serve as check points along every child's educational journey. With very few exceptions, testing results should be used to determine areas of strength and weakness so students can monitor and adjust. Set goals for any skills that need work and celebrate when your child reaches each goal.

To learn more about the test and what your child needs to know to be successful, visit ArizonaAimsHigher.org/AzMERIT.