

AZMERIT TOOLKIT FOR PARTNERS

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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 business and community organizations communicate about the new AzMERIT test. Please 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.

ArizonaAimsHigher.org

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

- Have a question about the new AzMERIT test? Check out these FAQ to see if you can find an answer: <http://bit.ly/AZtestFAQ> #AZAimsHigher
- Sure, it's still a test. But the new AzMERIT will do a better job of supporting student learning. <http://bit.ly/AzTest> #AZAimsHigher
- Why do we have a new assessment in AZ? Learn all about AzMERIT & how it supports student learning. <http://bit.ly/AzTest> #AZAimsHigher
- AzMERIT is a better tool for measuring student progress. Read about the changes here. <http://bit.ly/AzTest> #AZAimsHigher

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.



KEY TALKING POINTS

- It's time for our students' academic checkup! Students in third grade through high school will begin taking AzMERIT 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 February, juniors and seniors who did not originally pass AIMS will not be required to retake the AIMS test.
- AzMERIT is untimed and students 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 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 students have been doing in the classroom to this point has helped prepare him/her for this test. Every project, assignment and discussion has helped teach them develop critical thinking and problem solving skills.
- However it is important for parents to talk with their children about the new assessment to help minimize any fear or anxiety they may be feeling. Additionally, parents can take a practice test with their 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 students needs to know to be successful at ArizonaAimsHigher.org/AzMERIT.

FAQs

What is AzMERIT?

In November 2014, the Arizona State Board of Education adopted Arizona's Measurement of Educational Readiness to Inform Teaching (AzMERIT) as the new statewide test. The assessment will be given to Arizona students in 3rd grade through high school this spring and will replace the AIMS test in reading, writing and math. AIMS science test will still be given to students in Grades 4, 8 and high school.

Why did Arizona need a new assessment?

AIMS set the bar too low and was not aligned with what is being taught in Arizona classrooms today. It also did not provide teachers, students or parents with a valid indicator whether students are on track to succeed in college and career. Additionally, 2014 was the last year of the AIMS test; the contract that managed the assessment concluded at the end of the last school year.

Why do we 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. They give parents and teachers important opportunities to find out how your child is doing, and how they compare to other kids their age. Teachers will change from year to year. But the information from these tests will provide the constant, objective benchmark you can track over the course of your child's education.

What are the benefits of a new assessment?

With the new test, parents will have the peace of mind to know if their child is on track academically and is not falling behind. Students will know if they are prepared for the next grade and if they are ready 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.

Teachers will have additional information to meet the needs of their students. And business leaders will have confidence that our K-12 education system will better prepare our students for life after graduating from high school to prepare for jobs and build a strong economy.

Who will take AzMERIT?

Arizona students in public district and charter schools in third grade through high school will begin taking the tests in spring 2015 in reading, writing and math. For high school students, the new assessments will be given at the end of their courses, similar to a final exam.

Eligible students with significant cognitive disabilities will participate in other alternate achievement tests.

When will the test be given?

Students will take AzMERIT in the spring of 2015. The testing window for schools administering the computer-based test is March 30 – May 8, 2015.

The testing window for the paper-based test is April 13-24, 2015. Schools will inform students and parents of specific testing dates within these windows.

How will AzMERIT be administered?

AzMERIT will be computer-based. For schools that are not yet ready to administer a computer-based assessment, a paper-based version will be available. Schools will have the ability to opt-in to the computer-based test if they feel they have the resources to successfully administer the test in this manner.

Approximately 40% of schools statewide will be administering the test online this year. Check with your children's school to see how they are planning to give the test.

With a new test, will scores 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 our support, we know Arizona students will rise to the challenge.

How can I help prepare my child for the AzMERIT test?

Set shared goals with your child's teacher for what your child needs to know and be able to do during this school year. Check in regularly on your child's progress to see where your child might need help. Talk with your child about the new assessment – your conversations can help minimize any fear or anxiety your child may feel when taking the test this spring. If test scores look lower than you are used to, talk with your child's teacher and work together to determine a plan to help your child improve.

You can also take a practice AzMERIT test at home to help your child prepare. There is no need to create a login, just simply sign in as a guest. <http://bit.ly/AzMERITPracticeTest>

Is the AzMERIT test required for high school graduation?

Students WILL NO LONGER have to pass the AzMERIT test 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. Beginning with the class of 2017, all students will need to pass a civics test for graduation.

Will the standards and new test lead to unnecessary data collection by the federal government?

No. Personal student data has never been, and never will be, shared with the federal government. Student test data is protected via a number of state and federal laws, including: A.R.S. §§ 15-1041 through 15-1045, Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA).

The federal government is prohibited by these laws from collecting any personally identifiable data (e.g., name, place and date of birth, SSN, or any other information that could be used to distinguish an individual's identity) about individual students. This means that the federal government does not collect data about individual students or have access to data about individual students that states collect.

10 Things You Should Know About AzMERIT

Spring has arrived, which means it's already nearing the end of another school year in Arizona. It is 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.

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

1) Who will take AzMERIT?

Students in third grade through high school will be taking AzMERIT in reading, writing and math. For high school students, the new assessments will be given at the end of English and math courses, similar to a final exam. Students in 4th and 8th grade and in high school will still take the AIMS Science test.

2) When will the test be given?

The 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 is shorter than AIMS for 3rd through 8th graders, which means students will spend less time taking state tests than in previous years.

3) How will AzMERIT be administered?

School districts and charter schools can choose to administer the assessment via pencil/paper or on a computer. Approximately 40 percent of schools statewide will be administering the test online this year. Teachers will be communicating with parents to let them know the specifics about testing at their school.

4) What is AzMERIT?

AzMERIT includes a writing portion, two reading portions and two math portions. Each student will be tested over the course of 2-3 days. AzMERIT is untimed and students will be given as much time as needed to complete each portion.

5) Is the AzMERIT test required for high school graduation?

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.

6) How is AzMERIT different than AIMS?

The new test goes beyond multiple choice questions and will allow students to better demonstrate what they have learned during the school year. 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.

7) When will the results be available?

Ultimately, AzMERIT will allow for faster score reporting and results should be available before the end of the school year. However, the initial results from this year's test are not expected to be released until fall 2015.

8) Will AzMERIT lead to unnecessary data collection by the federal government?

No. Personal student data has never been, and never will be, shared with the federal government. Student test data is protected via a number of state and federal laws.

9) Will scores 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 Arizona students are doing worse. Instead, the scores will provide a more accurate view of how students are performing.

10) Will students, teachers and schools have time to adjust to new test?

Recently, a new law was adopted 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.

To learn more about the test and what students need to know to be successful, visit ArizonaAimsHigher.org/AzMERIT.