



March 23, 2015

Dear Students, Parents, and Guardians,

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

The Arizona State Board of Education (Board) has announced a new assessment to replace the AIMS tests beginning this spring. 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.)

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 are no longer 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. While your directors and teachers are the best sources for information, you may find additional information on the Arizona Department of Education website at www.azed.gov/AzMERIT.

These tests are an important way to measure the academic progress of our students. They also have an impact on how the state government views Ombudsman's success in educating your children. Please mark your calendar so you are aware of these important testing dates. Tests will be administered on the following dates:

Monday, April 13, 2015 - English 9 and English 11

Tuesday, April 14, 2015 – English 10

Wednesday, April 15, 2015 – Algebra I and Algebra II

Thursday, April 16, 2015 – Geometry

Friday, April 17, 2015 – AIMS Science for 10th grade student only

Monday, April 20, 2015 – Thursday, April 23, 2015 – Make-up Exams

We will be requiring all students to power off their cell phones each day April 13 – April 17, and any time during the make-up exams. This will save bandwidth capabilities within the school building to guarantee fewer interruptions with internet connectivity.

We would like to offer some suggestions on how you can help your son or daughter be prepared for these tests.

- Talk about AzMERIT with your son or daughter. Wish them luck and send them off with a smile each morning. When they take the test, ask them about it and show interest.
- It is extremely important that students are well rested and arrive to school on time. Studies show that teenagers need between 9 and 9 ½ hours of sleep nightly.
- Students need to eat breakfast in order to have the energy to take the test. Research shows that students who have eaten breakfast will have more endurance to complete academic activities in a successful manner. It can be concluded then that students for the afternoon class would benefit by eating lunch.

During testing time, we try to minimize any kind of interruption. We ask that you please not schedule appointments (dentist, doctor, etc.) on dates your child will be tested.

We thank all of you for entrusting us with your child's education and we appreciate your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact your student's director.

Thank you,

Carol M. Ruhnke

Arizona Charter Schools Operations Manager