AzMERIT Debuts

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Mesa Public Schools
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Online reports and data files to LEAs: October 6
Paper Family Reports to LEAs: October 20
ADE public release: Some time TBD in November

Joe O’Reilly, Ph.D.
Mesa Public Schools
Today’s Topics

- AzMERIT background
- How were performance levels established?
- Were the AzMERIT results expected?
- What will Family Reports look like?
- Are there resources for communication with families, teachers and communities?
The AzMERIT Test Was Created Just for Arizona

- AzMERIT is unique to Arizona, based on an AZ test blueprint which determined the objectives measured, the number of items per objective and the cognitive demand (e.g., recall or application or analysis)

- The test questions were drawn from a Utah item bank this year

- ADE is moving toward all items being written just for AzMERIT

- Until recently, no test had items written specifically for Arizona
AIMS Math Item

3 Which does not represent \( y \) as a function of \( x \) ?

- A \( x = y^2 + 2 \)
- B \( y = x^2 + 2 \)
- C \( x = y + 8 \)
- D \( y = -x + 8 \)
A local amusement park offers Ferris wheel rides to children and adults. A rider is located in the green car on the Ferris wheel.

Press the Play button to begin the Ferris wheel ride. The height of the rider at any point in the ride will be shown on the graph.

**AzMERIT Sample Math Item**

The managers of the amusement park want to change the number of rotations per minute to have more rides per hour. They determine the maximum safe speed is 4 rotations per minute.

Write a function that models the height, h(t), of the rider at t seconds, during a ride at 4 rotations per minute.
Initial Reactions to the Test

- Mesa Teachers (78%) felt it was harder than AIMS more than Mesa students (48% JH, 58% El)

- Teachers and students felt that it mostly covered what was taught (90% T, 87% JH, 89% El)

- Teachers thought the format was more difficult than students did (64%T, 52% JH, 45% El)

- Teachers were less likely to want to use computers next year (53%T, 67% JH, 68% El) and were more likely to think using the computer was hard (51% T, 22% JH, 38% El)
How Were Performance Levels Set?
ADE Had Teachers Develop Grade/Subject Performance Level Descriptors

Detailed descriptions, that describe the skills and abilities that students must demonstrate, are provided for each performance level.

http://www.azed.gov/assessment/azmeritsupportmaterials/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLD</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Minimally Proficient</th>
<th>Partially Proficient</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Highly Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Minimally Proficient student</td>
<td>The Partially Proficient student</td>
<td>The Proficient student</td>
<td>The Highly Proficient student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed</td>
<td>6.RP.A [1 to 2]</td>
<td>Identifies unit rates and describes them using basic language or notation.</td>
<td>Describes the concept of ratio using a limited variety of representations and determining a unit rate.</td>
<td>Uses the concept of a ratio, ratio language, ratio notation, and unit rate associated with a ratio to precisely describe a ratio relationship between two quantities and within context.</td>
<td>Uses and connects between representation for ratio situations and finds unit rates requiring multiple steps.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Identifies proportional relationships presented in graphical, tabular, or verbal formats, knows the meaning of a percent of a quantity as a rate per hundred, and finds missing values in tables and plots values on the coordinate plane using whole numbers.</td>
<td>Uses a limited variety of representations to solve ratio and unit rate problems involving whole numbers and to convert measurement units, finds the percent of a quantity, and manipulates units appropriately when multiplying or dividing quantities.</td>
<td>Uses ratio and rate reasoning to convert measurement units and solve real-world problems, solves unit rate problems including those involving unit pricing and constant speed, determines the percent of a quantity as a rate per 100, and solves problems involving finding the whole given a part and a percent.</td>
<td>Creates and applies ratio reasoning to solve real-world problems including those involving percent or conversion of measurement units.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Setting the Performance Levels

Minimally Proficient

Partially Proficient

Proficient

Highly Proficient
Setting Performance Levels

- Teams consisted of 11-12 teachers familiar with the specific grade levels

- There were teams for grades:
  - 3-4,
  - 5-6,
  - 7-8,
  - 9-10-11
  - In ELA and in math

- Within each grade/subject team teachers were divided into 3 tables of 4 teachers each
Setting Performance Levels

- Teachers reviewed the performance level descriptors.
- They took the test.
- They came to agreement of what a “just barely” proficient student would know and do.
- Then they set the cut points for highly proficient, proficient and partially proficient.
Setting Performance Levels: The Bookmark Method

- They were given the test items in order of difficulty, from easiest to hardest.

- They could see where the performance levels of NAEP, Smarter Balanced Test, AIMS, ACT College and Career Ready Index and/or PISA corresponded to the difficulty of certain items.

- They bookmarked where they thought the ‘just barely’ student would respond correctly and the ‘not there yet’ student would not.

- They then came to consensus as a table of 4 and then as the larger group of 12 teachers.
Setting Performance Levels: The Bookmark Method

- Then they saw what percent of students would fall in each performance category given their cutpoints.

- Then they went through the same process to review and possibly reset their bookmarks.

- They did this for each of the three boundaries – minimal to partial, partial to proficient, proficient to highly proficient

- Once one grade was completed, they went through a similar process for the lower grade.
“I felt my voice was heard in setting cut points for the AZ Merit. In my group, we had thoughtful and rich discussions placing bookmarks based on content. We had some close cut-point decisions and those that were higher/lower than expected. Teachers were able to share their rationale for cut points using the PLD documents and student performance. I did not feel pressured by AIR or ADE to select cut points, however after round 1 it was interesting to see our groups' similarities to Smarter Balanced and NAEP.”

-- Mesa Teacher
The State Board of Education Accepted the Teachers’ Recommendations With No Changes

- All subjects – ELA and math
- All grade levels – 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
- All performance levels – minimally proficient, partially proficient, proficient, highly proficient
We Expected Lower Passing Rates

Students may have only been exposed to the new standards for a limited time

Students must show their work and reasoning

Less familiarity with the new item formats
We Expected Passing to Decrease Because Expectations Increased
Expectations Moved From the NAEP Basic Level Closer to Proficient Level

Latest NAEP results for Arizona showing percent at or above the level indicated.
The Percent Proficient On AzMERIT Is Lower Than Passing on AIMS
This Drop Is Not Unique To Arizona

AzMERIT: Most Arizona students not ‘proficient’ in reading, math

Cathryn Creno, The Republic | azcentral.com
11:41 a.m. MST August 8, 2015

10 things parents need to know about the new state test.
Parents Will Be Concerned

- Many students who have been “Meeting The Standard” for years will suddenly be labeled as “Partially Proficient” or even “Minimally Proficient.”

- Districts should have a plan to prepare parents before results are released and a strategy for responding after the results are sent home.

- Teachers have the personal relationship with parents, so preparing your teachers to answer parents’ questions and concerns is very important.
How Will Parents React?
Family Report

Maria A. Doe
ABC School (123654)
ABC District (987456)

Grade 6 Math Assessment

About This Assessment
Maria took the AzMERIT Grade 6 Math assessment in spring 2015. The questions in this assessment measure the knowledge and skills taught in this grade and subject area. Maria's score shows how well she understands Grade 6 Math content. A student who scores Proficient or Highly Proficient on AzMERIT is likely to be ready for the next grade level of Math.

About This Report
Front:
- Maria's overall score for this assessment includes a numeric score and a proficiency level.
- Her numeric score can be compared with the school, district, and state averages.
- The proficiency level indicates how well students understand current grade level material and how likely they are to be ready for the next grade.

Back:
- Maria's level of mastery is shown for each scoring category.
- Scoring categories represent specific knowledge and skills included in this assessment.
- There is a detailed description of the mastery level for each scoring category.

Maria's Performance on the Math Assessment

Maria's score in Math is 3679, which is Highly Proficient.

Highly Proficient: Advanced understanding, highly likely to be ready

Proficient: Strong understanding, likely to be ready

Partially Proficient: Partial understanding, likely to need support to be ready

Minimally Proficient: Minimal understanding, highly likely to need support to be ready

School Average: 3639
District Average: 3634
State Average: 3629
In English Only

But, in cooperation with ADE which provided the report content, Mesa is translating the content and designing an interpretation guide. We will be making it available for download.

For more information about AzMERIT, go to azmeritportal.org.
AIMS Concept Reports Are Different

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strands/Concepts</th>
<th>Number Possible</th>
<th>Number Correct</th>
<th>Percent Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strand 1: Reading Process</td>
<td>###</td>
<td>###</td>
<td>###</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept 4: Vocabulary</td>
<td>###</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept 6: Comprehension</td>
<td>###</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strand 2: Comprehending Literary Text</td>
<td>###</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept 1: Elements of Literature</td>
<td>###</td>
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<td>###</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strand 3: Comprehending Informational Text</td>
<td>###</td>
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<td>###</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept 1: Expository Text</td>
<td>###</td>
<td>###</td>
<td>###</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept 2: Functional Text</td>
<td>###</td>
<td>###</td>
<td>###</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept 3: Persuasive Text</td>
<td>###</td>
<td>###</td>
<td>###</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>####</td>
<td>####</td>
<td>###</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Family Report Guide

AzMERIT FAMILY REPORT GUIDE

1. **Barrel Chart**
   This "barrel chart" shows the range of scores and the four performance levels possible on this test. Your student's numeric score is shown along with the averages for your student's school, district, and the state of Arizona.

2. **Performance Levels**
   Your student's performance level is identified in this box. There are four performance levels that describe the general skills and abilities for students who take the AzMERIT. Students who score in the "Proficient" or "Highly Proficient" range are likely to be ready for the next grade or course. Students who score in the "Partially Proficient" or "Minimally Proficient" range are likely to need support to be ready for the next grade or course.

3. **Scoring Categories**
   Each test has three or more scoring categories that describe the content in different parts of the test.

4. **Mastery Levels**
   Your student's ability level for each of these scoring categories is indicated. Students with the symbol ✔ or ✓ show a good understanding of the content covered in this scoring category. Students with the symbol ❌ likely need more support with the content covered in this scoring category.

5. **What Was Assessed?**
   This short paragraph describes what type of content is covered in this scoring category.

6. **What Do These Results Mean?**
   This short paragraph describes your student's understanding of the content in this scoring category based on his or her ability level.

For more information about AzMERIT, go to azeducation.gov.
How Can You Communicate This?

The performance levels were set by veteran Arizona teachers. They had high expectations for students and focused on what students should be able to do once we fully implement the standards, not just what many students can do today.

The results we are receiving are the new baseline. This is the first time we have given the AzMERIT test. It is a completely different test than AIMS, so comparing the results to AIMS is not appropriate. Teachers had not seen this test before and students only had access to some practice items a few weeks before the test, so scores are somewhat lower because of a lack of familiarity with the test format. So, this is the new baseline from which we need to improve.

The important thing these results tell us is not that scores are falling, but that expectations are soaring. What students need to know and be able to do on the AzMERIT test requires much more than the AIMS test. The teachers who set the performance levels saw where AIMS passing was on the new test, and went way above that.
New, more rigorous tests are being introduced not only in Arizona, but in most states around the country. If our students are to keep up with the students around the country when they go off to college and the workplace, we have to make sure Arizona students are held to a similarly high bar.

Other states saw a large drop in the percent proficient, similar to what we saw in Arizona, when new tests were put in place. This indicates that all states have significantly increased what is expected of students and schools.
Resources for Communicating With Parents Are Available

http://azmeritportal.org/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AzMERIT Family Report Guide – English</td>
<td>Sample Paper Report for both ELA and Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AzMERIT Sample Paper Report – ELA Grade 3</td>
<td>Sample Paper Report for both ELA and Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AzMERIT Sample Paper Report – Math Grade 6</td>
<td>Sample Paper Report for both ELA and Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AzMERIT Sample Paper Report – ELA Grade 9</td>
<td>Sample Paper Report for both ELA and Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AzMERIT Sample Paper Report – EOC</td>
<td>Sample Paper Report for both ELA and Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algebra I</td>
<td>Sample Paper Report for both ELA and Math</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here are samples of the AzMERIT Family Score Reports for both ELA and Math. There is also a Family Report Guide to help parents and students understand the different sections of the Family Score Reports.
Expect More Arizona Resources for Communicating With Parents

WHAT AZMERIT MEANS FOR YOUR CHILD

AzMERIT is like an annual checkup — an important opportunity to find out how your child is doing in school. Just as doctors check height and weight, teachers and parents use the test to check how students are doing in English and math.

Know If Your Child is on Track to Succeed
Although testing is never fun, assessments can be effective tools to support your child’s learning. With AzMERIT, you’ll know if your child is on track to succeed in the next grade and ultimately in college or career. As a parent, you will have the information you need to make sure your child is making progress and is not falling behind.

New Test, New Scores
AzMERIT will set a more realistic benchmark for student performance. Because it is a completely new test, scores will look different than AIMS and may seem lower than before. However, this doesn’t mean your child is doing worse. Instead, the scores will provide a more accurate view of how your child is doing academically.

Important Things Parents Need to Know
• Arizona students in first grade through high school take the AzMERIT test in reading, writing, and math each spring. For high school students, the test is given at the end of their English and math courses, similar to a final exam.
• School districts and charter schools can choose to administer AzMERIT via pencil/paper or on a computer. The questions are adaptable to either format.

What is AzMERIT?
AzMERIT replaced the AIMS test in reading, writing, and math for Arizona students in grades 3 through high school.
AzMERIT is better aligned with what your child is being taught in the classroom, goes beyond multiple choice questions to measure real learning and a focus on assessing critical-thinking and problem-solving skills.

Tips to Help Your Child
Set shared goals with your child: home or school. Choose a personalized goal.

http://www.expectmorearizona.org/arizona-aims-higher/resources/parents-families/
On our website we will have:

- Parent video
- Teacher video & FAQ
- Trifold brochure
- Spanish translations of the Family Report wording
- Other materials as developed

http://www.mpsaz.org/azmerit
• How were the performance levels established?
• Were the results expected?
• What will the Family Reports look like?
• What resources are available for communicating with families, teachers, & students?

Questions? Comments?

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