

**AzMERIT Parent Webinar
Q&A**

1. Where can we get the draft score reports?

Examples of the family score reports and the report guide are available at www.azed.gov/azmerit and AzMERITportal.org.

2. When are the test results being released?

According to the Arizona Department of Education, AzMERIT results will be available to districts and charters by early October. Districts and charters will receive copies of each student's family score report by mid-October. School and district level results will not be shared publically to the media by the Department before November.

3. Will the scores be sent home or sent to the schools?

Districts and charters will receive copies of each student's family score report by mid-October. Schools and districts will be responsible for distributing the score reports to each student's family. Some examples of how schools will distribute the reporters include sending them home in backpacks, scheduling parent meetings or mailing them home.

4. Will the scores be broken down by standards or just by subject?

Scores on the AzMERIT parent score reports will show performance levels in English Language Arts and math. 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. Each test has three or more scoring categories that describe the content in different parts of the test, which will be shown on the back of the family score report. There is a short paragraph that will describe the student's understanding of the content in this scoring category based on his or her ability level.

5. Which teachers gave input for the AzMERIT test? How?

The Arizona Department of Education works with groups of teachers from around the state to get input on topics ranging from test item review to score setting. There were 90 educators involved in reviewing test items for AzMERIT in December, 50 educators reviewed passages in April, 60 educators participated in content and bias review in June, and more than 80 participated in the score setting process in July. The Department is continuously seeking educator involvement in projects related to AzMERIT. To submit an application, visit: <http://www.azed.gov/assessment/2014/05/28/assessment-section-committee-application/>

6. If the test is specific to Arizona, how can it accurately judge how students compare to those in other states?

AzMERIT provides links to other tests to support comparisons of student achievement levels. Achievement levels on AzMERIT are comparable with Utah, Florida, and states in the Smarter Balanced Consortium.

7. In addition to informing instructional needs, will the high school End-of-Course (EOC) assessment serve an additional purpose? Such as grade impact, course completion requirement, etc. Is the End-of-Course test solely being used for progress/student performance levels?

Right now, the end of course tests are being used to tell parents, students, and teachers if students are on track to succeed in the next grade. Students are not required to pass the End-of-Course tests for graduation. However, they must still earn the minimum number of English and mathematics credits in order to graduate. The State Board of Education and local school districts may consider how end-of-course test scores could be included in course grades and if they will appear on student transcripts in future years.

8. Will the AzMERIT results be linked or available for school/teacher use under the AZDash system? When will the data be available?

Yes AzMERIT results will be available on AZDash. The timeline for this release has not been determined.

9. How are the tests scored, if the answers must also show thinking? Who scores and who judges whether the answer is correct?

All items are reviewed and approved by Arizona educators. That review includes confirming the answer key for items and any scoring rubrics. Items that require hand scoring are scored by trained scorers using the appropriate scoring rubric.

10. With the more open-ended questions, how much of the score is based on the right answer in the end and are there points for understanding the process? If so, how is this measured? Is the grading done using a rubric or something similar?

Items that have multiple points possible are scored using a rubric. The rubric determines how many points are possible based on the level of understanding exhibited in the response.

11. Are there any ways to see if a child is not doing well due to not trying versus not understanding?

Comparing student performance on AzMERIT with other English Language Arts and/or math assessments or course work can help determine whether poor performance on AzMERIT is due to not trying or due to not understanding. A student who did not try on AzMERIT would likely show better performance on other tests or course work.

12. If there are no consequence tied to student performance, why would a student be motivated to give his best effort?

AzMERIT test results provide students with valuable information about how they are doing and if they are prepared for the next grade and eventually for college and career. Students should use the test as an opportunity to check on their progress without the anxiety of needing to pass to graduate.

13. What percentage of items does a student have to answer correctly to be labeled highly proficient?

The State Board of Education determined the cut scores for each label based on the feedback from the educators who participated in Standard Setting this summer. These cut scores are not based on the number or a percentage of items answered correctly, but rather based on the level of mastery demonstrated by the items that were answered correctly. As the items on the tests change from one test administration to the next, the overall difficulty of the test will vary slightly from year-to-year. However, the level of mastery needed to pass the test will remain constant each year.

14. What about children who do poor testing?

Your child's school and teacher can provide suggestions for helping your child successfully know and demonstrate his or her understanding of the state standards, which is what the AzMERIT test is based on. Throughout the school year, there are many ways teachers assess how students are doing in their classroom, including classwork, homework, quizzes, projects, and teacher and counselor observations about your child's growth. The results from AzMERIT should be used along with all of this information to ensure your child is on track to succeed.

15. How are advanced students who take high school courses such as geometry in middle school being tested? Do they take an end of course test in middle school?

Students who are taking high school courses such as Geometry, Algebra I or Algebra II will take an End-of-Course AzMERIT test for that subject. Arizona was recently granted an ESEA waiver that accommodates students who are dual enrolled to only be required to take the End-of-Course assessment in both English Language Arts and math.

16. How will schools be rated/scored by AzMERIT?

A new law was adopted in 2015 to provide students, teachers and schools with a two-year transition period to adjust to the new AzMERIT exam in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years. During this time, our state's accountability system, including school letter grades, will be placed on hold.

17. How will scores be used to measure teachers' performance? Are AzMERIT scores used to evaluate teachers with respect to pay raises?

There has not been a decision made regarding accountability measures related to teacher performance.

18. Will there be any college scholarship programs tied to AzMERIT as was once the case with AIMS?

Currently there are no college scholarship programs tied to AzMERIT.

19. Are there any websites or resources that can help prepare for the testing going forward?

- Expect More Arizona, has a wealth of number of resources on the standards and assessments available on a dedicated website that you can access at ArizonaAimsHigher.org. Items include Grade by Grade Parent Guides, an overview of AzMERIT, videos, activities to do at home, and more.
- Arizona PTA also has information on its website at AZPTA.org.
- Sample practice tests and family score reports are available at AzMERITportal.org.

20. Are there any resources to help my student study?

Download the Grade-by-Grade Parent Guides available at ArizonaAimsHigher.org, which provide parents an overview of the key things their child will be learning in each grade (Kindergarten through high school), along with helpful activities parents can do at home to reinforce what students are learning during the school day.

Other resources to check out include BeALearningHero.org; National PTA's Parent Guides to Student Success at pta.org; and Great! Kids Milestones Video Series at greatschools.org/gk/milestones.