

AzMERIT

Frequently Asked Questions

When will I receive my child's scores?

In November 2015, parents will receive their child's AzMERIT score report. Within the report, parents will find information on their child's test performance and specific skills that need improvement. Mesa Public Schools will provide an easy-to-follow tutorial on how to navigate this report. Beginning in 2016, AzMERIT results will be distributed before the end of the school year.

Will my child have to pass AzMERIT to graduate?

Passing AzMERIT is not a requirement for high-school students.

What should you take away from this report?

This AzMERIT score report helps you understand your child's academic achievement. You can see how your child is performing in comparison to peers in the same grade level, school, and district. In addition to giving you an overall score, the report also breaks down each subject into categories to provide you with a better understanding of how your child performed in different areas of math and English.

Why does my child's score look different than scores on previous tests?

Because AzMERIT is a new test, the first year test scores set a new baseline from which progress will be measured. Your child's score, as well as school and district results, may appear lower this year because the tests measure more complex skills including critical thinking, problem solving, and analysis. A low score does not mean your child did not improve or learned less. It simply means that the expectations have been raised for students and the results provide a more accurate picture of how your child is progressing. These scores cannot be compared to previous test scores since they focus on different skills.

How will my child's score be used?

Scores will be used to better tailor instruction to individual student needs and give us a tool to see how students and schools across the state are doing.

What if my child did well on his or her report card last year, but not as well on this test?

The new tests are only one of several measures that are used to determine your child's academic performance. Report card grades include multiple sources of information - participation, work habits, group projects, and homework - all of which are important in determining a child's academic achievement. These sources are not reflected on the test, so there may be some differences. To further explore your child's academic achievement, talk with his or her teacher.

What types of questions were asked?

AzMERIT includes a number of different types of questions, including performance tasks that are multi-step assignments that ask students to apply their knowledge and skills to address real-world problems. In English, students have to apply their research and writing skills, and in math, they solve complex problems and then describe and defend their reasoning. The test also includes traditional multiple choice questions, as well as interactive questions that require students to drag and drop their answers into a box, create equations, and fill in the answer.

How are the new tests different?

They focus on measuring real-world skills. For example, students were asked to read complex passages, analyze them, and write thoughtful responses, which is different from previous tests. This was also the first time a statewide test included a writing section at every grade level.

AzMERIT does not lend itself to teaching to the test. By moving away from simple fill in the bubble tests, the temptation to teach to the test was eliminated. The new tests emphasize applying skills over memorization. Strong teaching coupled with engaged learning throughout the year is the best way to prepare for this test. Since the standards ensure students are learning what they need to know, and the new tests are aligned to the standards, schools can now focus on what is most important, instead of test prep.

Are there any ways to see if a child is not doing well due to lack of effort versus lack of 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.

How can I use these test results to help my child improve?

You can use the test results to guide a discussion with your child's teachers about additional supports or challenges that may be needed in class, as well as ways to support your child at home. Your child's performance is broken down into categories in each subject. Therefore, you can use also this information to locate activities online that were designed specifically for each category at every grade level.

How long will it be before I can see progress in my child's score?

As teachers spend more time focusing on the content outlined in the new standards and students gain more practice with the skills, scores are expected to improve over time.