



New Mexico Statewide Assessment Program Including NMSAP

Understanding the New Mexico Statewide Assessment Program

Students in New Mexico are assessed on a statewide basis in core academic subject throughout their education. In grades 3-8 and during high school, students will take Standards Based Assessments that gauge student learning and monitor that students are being taught to the expectations laid out in the New Mexico Content Standards and the Common Core Standards.

Both of these are curricular framework that lay out an organized plan for teaching academic subjects. The skills and knowledge addressed in each subject are laid out so that teachers may cover the topics as they will be covered on the Standards Based Assessments that students take.

In grades 3-8 students are assessed in Reading, Mathematics and Spanish Reading. In grades 4 and 7 students will also take a Standards Based Assessment in Science. In high school, students take Reading and Mathematics. There are also Standards Based Assessments in Social Studies and Science; however those are not being administered in the 2011-2012 school year.

Students take these assessments in grades 10 and 11 for purposes of monitoring educational progress and fulfilling state and federal legal requirements. The scores students receive on these assessments count toward high school graduation requirements.

In the Spring of 2012, the Science Assessment is not being administered to second year high school students. The Social Studies Standards Based Assessment will not be administered to students in grade 11. Additionally, the Standards Based Assessment in Writing for grades 4, 6, 7 and 11 has been suspended for the 2011-2012 school year. Both the Public Education Department and schools will have detailed information on current cancellations and plans to resume any assessments.

In the coming years, New Mexico along with about 40 other states will be transitioning to the use of Common Core Standards for teaching and learning. The Common Core Standards are developed for use in Mathematics and English/Language Arts; they oversee that the major skills of each subject are laid out clearly and that the learning objectives are aligned to college and career pursuits in the 21st century.

Because the states are moving to adopt the Common Core Standards there will be transitions to the Statewide Assessment Program. The Assessments must be aligned to the specific curriculum, or standards, that are in use so that appropriate measures of progress can be used.

Format of the New Mexico Statewide Assessment Program

For students in grades 3-8 who take the Standards Based Assessment in Reading, Spanish Reading, Mathematics and Science (for grades 4 and 7) the test questions are written in multiple-choice, short-answer and open-ended formats. The majority of questions are multiple-choice. The testing time can take between 2-4 hours depending on the test and the grade.

For high school students, the Standards Based Assessment in Reading, Spanish Reading and Mathematics also ask questions in multiple-choice, short-answer and open-ended formats. The Reading and Spanish Reading Tests are 160 minutes and the Mathematics Tests is 210 minutes. The current version of the Science Test is 135 minutes and uses the same question format, although will not be administered in the 2011-2012 school year. While students will continue taking courses in Social Studies, the Standards Based Assessment for grade 11 in Social Studies is also not being administered in 2011-2012.

Students will receive scaled scores and proficiency level scores. Students will attain one of four proficiency levels: Advanced, Proficient, Nearly Proficient, and Beginning Step. The scaled score is a numerical score that represents the total number of correct answers, the difficulty level of correct answers and computes into a scaled score. A cut score is the numerical level at which the scale score moves from one proficiency level to the next.

Taking the New Mexico Statewide Assessment Program

In Mathematics, the content covered is in numbers and operations, algebra, geometry, measurement and data analysis. While all questions are asked at grade-appropriate levels and young students are not expected to understand high school level algebra, the processes within these content areas makes up the field of mathematics and how the curricular standards structure the subject.

In Reading, students are expected to be able to use comprehension strategies, use and understand literature and media. Sub-skills that go into developing proficiency in these areas are: gathering and using information, applying critical thinking skills for analysis of information, demonstrating abilities in the reading process, making connections between works and ideas, analyze inferences and analyze themes.

In Science, students will learn about and be assessed on the nature of science, physical and earth science and life science. In Social Studies, the curriculum provides for students to learn and be assessed in local and national history.

The Writing Framework expects students to be able to write effectively using appropriate grammatical and language conventions and being able to write for a variety of purposes.

With the transition to Common Core Standards, the substance of student learning will not change dramatically. A certain organization to the subjects may be shifted, but students will still be taught to the highest standards developed by educators across the country.

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