



Arizona Department of Education

Statewide Assessments and Accountability

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The Arizona Department of Education is responsible for administering statewide assessments of students enrolled in Arizona public schools. All public schools, including district schools and charter schools, are required to administer state and federally mandated assessments.

Assessment	Type of Assessment	Test Window	Grade Levels Tested	Required or Optional	
AzM2 English Language Arts (ELA) and Math	Achievement	Computer-Based		Grades 3-8, 10	Required by State & Federal Government
		Grade 3: 04/05 – 04/30/21	Grades 4-8, 10: 04/05 – 05/14/21		
		Paper-Based			
		Grade 3: 04/05 – 04/14/21	Grades 4-8, 10: 04/05 – 04/21/21		
AzSCI Science	Achievement	Field Test: 03/22 – 04/30/21	Grades 5, 8, 11	Required by State & Federal Government	
Menu of Assessments (only for participating districts/charters)	Achievement	ACT: 03/02 & 04/06/21		Grade 11	Optional per State Statute
		SAT: 03/03 & 03/24/21			
Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) ¹ ELA and Math	Alternate	03/15 – 5/14/21		Grades 3-8, 11	Required by State & Federal Government
MSAA Science	Alternate	Field Test: 03/15 – 5/14/21	Grades 5, 8, 11	Required by State & Federal Government	
AZELLA	English Language Proficiency	Placement Test: 2 weeks before start of school – 05/14/21			Required by State & Federal Government
AZELLA		Reassessment Test: 02/1 – 05/21/21			

¹ MSAA is only administered to students with significant cognitive disabilities. The federal government allows states to only test 1% of their students on the statewide alternate assessment.



Arizona Department of Education

National Assessment of Educational Progress	English Language Proficiency National	Stand Alone Field Test: Postponed until Fall 2021	School Sample: Grades 4, 8	Required by State & Federal Government Required by State & Federal Government
		Native Speaker Field Test: 04/12 – 04/23/21		
		Postponed due to COVID-19		

Q: Will districts and charter school still be required to administer statewide assessments in Spring 2021?

A: Currently, AzM2 and other statewide assessments are still scheduled to be administered in Spring 2021. The authority to cancel the administration of statewide assessments lays solely with the federal government. President Biden’s Department of Education has not issued a waiver. At this moment, all student must be tested even if they are participating in distance learning.

There are state requirements associated with the federally required administration of statewide assessments. During the December 14, 2020 State Board of Education meeting, the Board approved the extension of the AzM2 testing window by two weeks. The test window shown in the chart reflects the approved extension.

Q: Will the same state and federal accountability measures (i.e., A-F letter grades) still apply for the 2020-2021 school year?

A: At this time, no changes have been made to any state or federal accountability measures related to the 2021 statewide assessments. The Arizona Legislature (convened on January 11) and the U.S. Department of Education have the authority to make changes to the accountability systems. As of February 16th, Governor Ducey signed HB2402 pausing A-F school letter grades related to AzM2 for the school year 2021.

Additionally, Governor Ducey signed Executive Order 2021-03 which directs the AZ State Board of Education to utilize AzM2 and other assessment data from this school year (2020-2021) to draw comparisons to other years by identifying the learning that took place during the pandemic.

Q: What are field tests?

A: Field tests are administered during an assessment’s development process to check on the quality and appropriateness of test items, procedures, scoring, and reporting.

Q: What are benchmark assessments? Are they required by the state or federal government?



Arizona Department of Education

A: Benchmark assessments are administered periodically throughout the school year to establish baseline achievement data or measure progress toward academic standards or goals. These assessments are administered at the discretion of school districts and charter schools and are not required by the state or federal government.

However, Executive Order 2020-41 required school districts and charter schools to conduct benchmark testing within the first six weeks of the 2020-21 school year for students in kindergarten programs and grades one through twelve. This requirement is unique to the COVID-19 pandemic and is not required on a yearly basis.

Q: Will statewide assessments be administered in-person or remotely/digitally due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

A: All statewide assessments will be administered in-person with some local education agencies administering assessments online or on paper at their school sites in order to ensure tests are valid and reliable. The extended test windows recently permitted by the State Board of Education will allow schools to bring in smaller groups of students to test over a longer period of time.

Q: What is the difference between formative and summative assessments?

A: Formative assessments are used to evaluate student comprehension, learning needs, and academic progress during a lesson or course (i.e., benchmark assessments). Summative assessments are used to evaluate learning progress and achievement at the end of a specific instructional period like at the end of a course, semester, or school year (i.e., the AzM2 standardized test).