

State Assessment Will Soon Change

The state of Arizona has used the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) test to assess student achievement in grades 3-8 and 10 for a number of years now. The test was originally designed to measure the Arizona State Standards, which have now been replaced by the Arizona College and Career Readiness Standards. As the new standards represent a major shift in rigor and depth a new assessment must be put in place. The challenge for Arizona schools over the next year will be that the new standards will be taught, but the old test will be used to measure student achievement. The reason for this misalignment is that the state of Arizona will not be putting in place the new assessment until the spring of 2015. Arizona schools will "pilot" a new test this spring, but until the legislature acts on a funding level it is not clear which test will actually be used in 2015 and beyond.

Many of you have heard of the PARCC test, which the state has discussed using as the assessment to measure the new standards starting next school year. The PARCC test will be piloted this coming spring, but recent discussions have indicated that the cost of the new PARCC assessment might preclude its adoption and use. The PARCC test is estimated to cost around \$29/student, while the existing AIMS test runs around \$21/student. The state will put out an RFP after the legislative session (when the available funding level is clear) and interested testing companies will submit their proposals. One other test which has been discussed at the state level is the Aspire, which is an ACT/Pearson product. It is said to be aligned with the Arizona College and Career Readiness Standards, but has not been designed as of yet to extend down to grade 3 (the new test will assess students in grades 3-11). It is fairly clear that both PARCC and Aspire will compete to become the new state test in Arizona, but again, the decision is truly dependent upon how much funding the legislature provides for this purpose.

I will continue to keep the community informed regarding this testing transition, but it is important to note that Arizona schools, including Wickenburg, will be misaligned until a new assessment is put in place. Although students will be learning the new standards the state's testing process will take a bit of time to catch up. Once we hit the summer of 2015, we should begin to see how our students are performing in relationship to their peers in other Arizona school districts. We are in for an interesting time of transition, but we will continue to do our best to provide a quality education for each and every district student.