

Last AIMS Test Coming in April

In about a month students in grades 3-8 will take the AIMS test for the last time. Starting next school year WUSD students will take the new state assessment, which has yet to be named by the State Board of Education. At this point we believe the new state test will either be the PARCC test, which is set to be administered to approximately 22 million students in the U.S., or alternatively it may be the ACT Aspire. It is our hope to know sometime over the summer, but it is not completely clear when the State Board of Education will make a final decision.

Many of you have heard of the PARCC test, which the state has discussed using as the assessment to measure the new Arizona College and Career Ready Standards. The PARCC test is being piloted this spring, but recent discussions indicate 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 Board of Education is sending out a Request for Proposals (RFP) at the conclusion of this legislative session (when the available funding level is clear) and interested testing companies will submit their proposals. The other test which has been discussed at the state level is the Aspire, which is an ACT/Pearson product. It is said to also be aligned to the new state 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 in part dependent upon how much funding the legislature provides for this purpose in the next month or two.

This has been a challenging year for students and teachers from the perspective that they are attempting to prepare students for the new standards, yet have been maintaining a focus on the existing standards which will be assessed this one last time by the AIMS test. Clearly not an easy mandate, but typical in situations where states and school districts transition to new, more rigorous teaching standards.

Once we know more about the new state assessment I will be sure to let the community know how this story has turned out. At this point it is a waiting game, which is dependent upon both legislative and State Board of Education action.

As mentioned earlier the countdown to the last administration of AIMS has begun and thus will end the test which was designed to measure 10th grade level proficiency. On the horizon is an assessment which targets true college and career readiness and I am excited to make the transition and begin the challenge of moving each student to the next academic level.