



STATE OF NEW MEXICO  
PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
300 DON GASPAR  
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501-2786  
Telephone (505) 827-5800  
[www.ped.state.nm.us](http://www.ped.state.nm.us)

HANNA SKANDERA  
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

SUSANA MARTINEZ  
GOVERNOR

**MEMORANDUM**

July 22, 2011

**TO:** Public School Superintendents, Charter School Administrators, Directors of State Educational Institutions, and BIE School Administrators

**FROM:** Hanna Skandera  
Secretary of Education, designate *HS*

**RE:** **Advances in New Mexico's Assessment and Accountability System**

---

We are receiving a number of questions about recent changes in content standards and assessments and how they impact student achievement and AYP results. I appreciate your inquiries. Please find an information sheet attached that explains the following improvements:

- Grade 11 Content Standards Raised to Ready Students for College and Careers
- Assessments Streamlined to Deliver Results Earlier, Reduce Costs and Testing Time
- SBA Performance Standards Raised to Meet National Standards and Remedy Sixth Grade Dip
- Improved SBA Scale to Measure Student Growth
- Stronger Test Security for High Stakes Uses
- More Information on Adequate Yearly Progress

The Assessment and Accountability Division is ready to answer your questions about any of these changes. Please contact Robert Romero, Assessment Coordinator, ([robert.romero1@state.nm.us](mailto:robert.romero1@state.nm.us) or 505.827.6524), or Dr. Tom Dauphinee, Deputy Director of Assessment and Accountability ([tom.dauphinee@state.nm.us](mailto:tom.dauphinee@state.nm.us) or 505.827.6528) with questions about content standards, performance standards, and assessments; and Dr. Cindy Gregory ([cindy.gregory@state.nm.us](mailto:cindy.gregory@state.nm.us)) will answer questions about AYP.

Thank you for supporting our assessment and accountability system to improve student outcomes.

Attachment (1)

HS/TD

cc: PED Executive Team  
PED Leadership Team  
District Test Coordinators



New Mexico Public Education Department

## Advances in New Mexico's Assessment & Accountability System

New Mexico's Assessment and Accountability System is made up of four key parts designed to raise student achievement. They include the New Mexico Academic Content Standards, student assessments, performance standards, and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Last year, we made important improvements in these areas to promote student success, and more improvements are coming in 2011-2012.

### **Grade 11 Content Standards Raised to Ready Students for College and Careers**

In 2009, New Mexico made major changes in Grade 11 content standards in English Language Arts (ELA) to parallel the American Diploma Project's college and career readiness standards. These standards mark a path for students to learn what they need to succeed in college and jobs with long term potential.

New Mexico's Grade 11 content standards are on the PED website at:  
<http://www.ped.state.nm.us/standards/>

You can learn more about American Diploma Project standards at:  
<http://www.achieve.org/standards-0>

The Standards Based Assessment (SBA) was redesigned and field tested in 2010 to measure Grade 11 ELA college and career readiness standards. Students were tested on those skills for the first time on the 2011 SBA.

### **Assessments Streamlined to Deliver Results Earlier, Reduce Costs and Testing Time**

In spring 2012, the SBA will be given in four weeks instead of five to deliver test results to districts by May 31. The test window will run from March 19, 2012-April 13, 2012. The 2013 test window will run for three weeks from March 18, 2013-April 5, 2013, and data will be delivered by May 22, a full month earlier than in 2011. Even more, AYP and school grades will be published by the end of June 2012.

The SBA will be streamlined in 2012 by suspending the Writing test in grades 4, 6, 7, and 11 and Social Studies in grade 11. Students in grades 3, 5, and 8 can still take the Writing test without using special state funding to design the tests, yet another cost savings. The Alternate Performance Assessment (NMAPA) in Social Studies is also suspended in 2011-2012.

We will draw test items from the SBA's bank rather than writing new items. This will bring costs to districts and the PED down, and it will take from 30% to 50% less time to give the SBA. For example, the time needed to give the grade 11 SBA will fall from 23 hours in 2011 to 11 hours in 2012.

The share of multiple choice items used in the SBA is increased from 70% to 80% of the test to reduce costs to districts. The SBA still contains short answer and essay items to measure advanced problem solving skills.

These changes will also lower costs of the SBA and NMAPA for districts and the PED. In 2012, the SBA in grades 3 through 8 will cost \$32.12 per booklet and the grade 11 SBA will cost \$73.13 per booklet. That means the cost of the SBA in grades 3 through 8 will fall by \$11.91 per booklet, and the cost of the grade 11 SBA will go down by \$5.35 per booklet. Also, NMAPA costs will drop to \$50.00 from \$75.00 per student.

Even though no new SBA items will be written and no more items will be released, items and practice tests from prior releases will still be available online at:

<http://www.ped.state.nm.us/AssessmentAccountability/AssessmentEvaluation/SBA/index.html>

## **SBA Performance Standards Raised to Meet National Standards and Remedy Sixth Grade Dip**

Whenever a test design is changed in the ways outlined above, new performance standards, or cut scores, must be set. These changes also gave us a chance to repair performance standards that falsely made sixth graders underperform their classmates in adjacent grades, a problem that troubled New Mexico educators for many years. Performance standards in Reading and Science were raised to match national standards that give students the best chances for success in college and careers. This decision was supported by a recent study that found that 33% of New Mexico students scoring Proficient or above on the grade 11 SBA are required to take remedial English courses in college. The new performance standards will help New Mexico make a successful switch to next generation assessments that are based on challenging Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

New Mexico's CCSS in English/Language Arts and Math can be found on the NMPED website at the following links:

<http://www.nmcpr.state.nm.us/NMAC/parts/title06/06.029.0013.htm>

<http://www.nmcpr.state.nm.us/NMAC/parts/title06/06.029.0014.htm>

More information about the 2011 SBA performance standards can be found at:

<http://www.ped.state.nm.us/AssessmentAccountability/AssessmentEvaluation/sba/dl11/New%20SBA%20Cut%20Score%20Memo.20110701.pdf>

## **Improved SBA Scale to Measure Student Growth**

2011 SBA scores are reported on a new vertically moderated scale. The new scale allows better comparisons of student progress and it is better suited for advanced growth models such as those used for measuring educator effectiveness. Scores on the vertically moderated scale range from 0 to 80, and a score of 40 represents Proficient performance. The first digit of a scale score identifies the grade level. For example, scale scores for grade 3 range from 300 to 380. More details on the vertically moderated scale can be found at:

<http://www.ped.state.nm.us/AssessmentAccountability/AssessmentEvaluation/sba/dl11/New%20SBA%20Cut%20Score%20Memo.20110701.pdf>

## **Stronger Test Security for High Stakes Uses**

New procedures will be put in place to prevent breaches of test security from high stakes uses of SBA scores such as qualifying students to graduate from high school and measuring the effectiveness of teachers and principals. These changes are particularly important when no new items will be written for the SBA. Effective instruction for our students depends on accurate test results for pointing out strengths and needs. And, the PED has spent more than \$4 million annually to develop state assessments. The following improvements will be set in place to protect our investment in students:

- SBA sessions must be given in a certain order and schedule yet to be set.
- Student test data files will contain student scores by subject and subarea performance and they will not contain student answers to test items.
- The SBA student answer documents will be analyzed for unusual response patterns. The PED will investigate instances where it appears that answers might have been changed to artificially raise test scores.

## **More Information on Adequate Yearly Progress**

There are additions to the 2011 AYP FAQ to better explain Safe Harbor and how to read a report. Details on these additions can be found at:

<http://ped.state.nm.us/ayp2011/>

## **The PED Can Answer Your Questions**

The Assessment and Accountability Division is ready to answer your questions about changes in the SBA and NMAPA. Please contact Robert Romero, Assessment Coordinator, ([robert.romero1@state.nm.us](mailto:robert.romero1@state.nm.us) or 505.827.6524), or Dr. Tom Dauphinee, Deputy Director of Assessment and Accountability ([tom.dauphinee@state.nm.us](mailto:tom.dauphinee@state.nm.us) or 505.827.6528) with questions about content

standards, performance standards, and assessments; and Dr. Cindy Gregory ([cindy.gregory@state.nm.us](mailto:cindy.gregory@state.nm.us)) will answer questions about AYP.