



**STATE OF NEW MEXICO
PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
300 DON GASPAR AVE.
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501-2786
Telephone (505) 827-5800
<https://web.ped.nm.gov/>**

MARIANA D. PADILLA
SECRETARY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM
GOVERNOR

April 23, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents, Charter School Administrators, District Test Coordinators

FROM: Mariana D. Padilla, Secretary of Public Education

RE: **School Year 2026–27 Assessment Program Requirements**

Initial
MDP

Using data as a basis for information gathering and decision making is a core component of New Mexico’s Multi-Layered System of Supports and school improvement. The New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) encourages school leaders to identify local instructional priorities and to design a local, balanced assessment system (e.g., formative assessment strategies, progress monitoring, universal screening, interim/benchmarking, summative) aligned to those priorities. While local education agencies (LEAs) have the flexibility to include additional assessments beyond state-supported and federally-required assessments, this memorandum provides clarifications and guidance for the upcoming academic year.

Assessment Administration Calendar and Requirements

The SY 2026–27 draft assessment schedule is available [here](#). Districts and charter schools are responsible for assigning and administering required state assessments to all students based on the PED’s [2026–27 School Year Test Assignment Guidance](#). Please note that the PED does *not* allow for a parent or guardian to “opt-out” of required state assessments on behalf of their student.

Designating District Test Coordinators, Accountability Leads, & Technology Coordinators

Each year, district and charter school leaders must formally designate the primary and secondary district test coordinator (DTC) and technology coordinator per 6.10.7 NMAC to oversee official assessment business and to gain access to secure test management portals. A current list of DTCs and accountability leads is [available here](#). The PED asks that superintendents and charter school administrators complete [the DTC and Accountability Lead Designation Form](#) for school year (SY) 2026–27 by July 31, 2026.

Fall District Test Coordinator Training

The PED’s Assessment Bureau will host all DTC required trainings virtually according to the [SY 2026–27 Assessment Training Schedule](#).

Assessments & Content Standards Alignment

All assessments are aligned to the current New Mexico-adopted content standards.

Assessment	State-adopted Content Standards
WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS (ACCESS for ELLs)	WIDA’s English Language Development Standards
New Mexico Measures of Student Success and Achievement (NM-MSSA)	Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Language Arts and Mathematics
SAT School Day	
Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Alternate Assessment	Essential Elements in Language Arts , Mathematics , and Science
New Mexico Assessment of Science Readiness (NM-ASR)	New Mexico STEM Ready! Science Standards

Additional information, including fact sheets, test blueprints, state-adopted Performance Level Descriptors and scale scores, accommodations information, and practice test resources can be found within the Educator Resources sections of the [PED’s Assessment website](#).

ASSESSMENT PROGRAM AT-A-GLANCE

Schools by Designation Accountability Model Designation	Balanced Assessment System Measures							
	Assessment Literacy for Understanding Assessment Data & Reports ¹	Screeners: Dyslexia ¹ Gifted & EL ¹	K–2 Amira ISIP at BOY, MOY, & EOY for Early Math & Literacy ¹	K–2 Amira ISIP Monthly Progress Monitoring for Students at Performance Levels 1-3 ¹	3–8 Interim Assessments Math & Reading	Grade 9/Fall PSAT 8/9	Grade 10 Fall PSAT/NMS QT ¹	ESSA End-of-Year Summative Assessments ²
Spotlight	Encouraged	Required	Required	Required	Required	Encouraged	Encouraged	Required
Traditional	Encouraged	Required	Required	Required	Required	Encouraged	Encouraged	Required
TSI	Encouraged	Required	Required	Required	Required	Encouraged	Encouraged	Required
ATSI	Encouraged	Required	Required	Required	Required	Encouraged	Encouraged	Required
CSI	Required	Required	Required	Required	NM-iMSSA Required ¹	Encouraged	Required	Required
CSI-MRI	Required	Required	Required	Required	NM-iMSSA Required ¹	Encouraged	Required	Required

¹These programs are available to all districts and charters at no cost.

²The state pays for the majority of ESSA assessment costs, and [districts and charters pay a portion](#) of some ESSA assessments.

NEW PROGRAM UPDATES & SUPPORTS

Istation’s Indicators of Progress (ISIP) Lectura Assessment Transition to Evaluar

The legacy Istation ISIP Lectura Assessment will be replaced by Evaluar starting SY 2026–27. Similar to Amira, Evaluar will include productive components and receptive components, including Rapid Automatized Naming, Letter Sounds, Beginning Sound Isolation, Blending, Oral Reading Fluency, Word Decoding, Listening Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary, Grapheme-Phoneme Conversion, Spelling, and Written Communication.

- To prepare schools utilizing Amira’s Spanish assessments for this transition, the PED and Amira will be conducting “Transitioning from ISIP Lectura to Amira Evaluar” trainings:
 - [Option 1](#), May 6: 9 a.m. – 10 a.m.
 - [Option 2](#), May 21: 2 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Literacy Champion Initiative

Starting in SY 2026–27, the Literacy and Humanities Bureau will ask all elementary schools to identify a **Literacy Champion** who will serve as the site-based lead to support teachers with Amira ISIP data reports, including assessment administration, progress monitoring, and coordination of tutoring supports. The selected individual will receive a stipend. Full guidance and expectations will be outlined in the **Structured Literacy Updates Memorandum** to be released in June. Identifying a Literacy Champion is critical to ensuring consistent school-level implementation of data-driven instruction, strengthening teacher capacity, improving the use of real-time student data, and accelerating reading outcomes by providing a dedicated point of expertise and support within each school. For questions about this initiative, please contact severo.martinez@ped.nm.gov.

SAT School Day Spanish Reading and Writing Accommodated Form

The PED is pleased to announce that the College Board has approved the use of a Spanish-language SAT School Day Reading and Writing form—aligned to the *Prueba de Aptitud Académica (PAA)* and currently administered in Puerto Rico—as an accommodated option for grade 11 English learners. Beginning in Spring 2027, this accommodated SAT School Day Spanish form will replace the Grade 11 Spanish Standards-Based Assessment (SBA) Reading form.

Free PSAT 8/9 Fall Administration for 9th Graders

Starting this fall, the PED is making available and encourages schools to offer the PSAT 8/9 to grade 9 students during the fall administration at no cost. The PSAT 8/9 is aligned with the SAT Suite of Assessments and provides an early, standards-based measure of students’ readiness for college and careers. Results offer valuable insights into students’ academic strengths and areas for growth, helping educators and students understand progress toward future success on assessments such as SAT School Day, while informing instruction and academic planning.

Lexiles & Quantile District Toolkit

The PED and MetaMetric are excited to announce the launch of the free [District Toolkit](#), a new online resource created to help educators put Lexile® & Quantile® measures into action—in classrooms, schools, districts, and at home.

The Toolkit brings together the most important supports in one place, including:

- Framework Fundamentals: to build a shared understanding of Lexile and Quantile measures.

- **Measures in Action:** to support daily instruction and strengthen family engagement.
- **Measures Into Momentum:** to help deepen implementation across teams.

The Toolkit offers ready-to-use templates and downloadable checklists for planning, communication, and data use. Short micro-training videos are available that model real examples of Lexile and Quantile measures at work. This Toolkit provides clear, practical guidance for teachers, curriculum coordinators, coaches, and administrators to improve outcomes for all learners.

REQUIREMENTS FOR DESIGNATED SCHOOLS

As a reminder, the PED will release the 2025–26 ESSA Accountability Cycle designations earlier than in previous cycles. Based on the [2026–27 SY Accountability Schedule of Events](#), these embargoed designations will be available to schools as early as August.

Schools designated as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) and More Rigorous Interventions (MRI) in the 2024–25 ESSA Accountability Cycle, and those newly identified as CSI and MRI in the 2025–26 ESSA Accountability Cycle, **will have additional assessment requirements**. Schools that exit CSI or MRI designation based on the 2025–26 ESSA Accountability Cycle will be exempt from these requirements:

- **Use of State-Specified Grades 3–8 Interim Assessments:** The state-funded interim Measures of Student Success and Achievement (iMSSA) for Reading, Language Usage, and Math is required for CSI and MRI schools.
- **Grade 10 Fall PSAT/NMSQT:** The fall Grade 10 administration of the PSAT/NMSQT is required. The PSAT/NMSQT is state-funded for all 10th-grade students through the PED’s College and Career Readiness Bureau. Please contact Dr. Justin Makemson at justin.makemson@ped.nm.gov with any questions regarding PSAT/NMSQT.

CONTINUED REQUIREMENTS & SUPPORTS

Early Years Interim Assessment & Progress Monitoring for Math and Literacy

During the 2026–27 school year, all K–2 students are required to take the Amira interim beginning-of-year (BOY), middle-of-year (MOY), and end-of-year (EOY) assessments. The following should be noted for this coming school year:

- **Required Monthly Progress Monitoring:** Monthly progress monitoring is critical for struggling readers, as it allows educators to track students’ growth and pinpoint areas where they may need additional support. By identifying these gaps early, educators can intervene before these issues compound. With consistent progress monitoring data, teachers can tailor their instruction to focus on the areas that are most challenging for individual students. Additionally, students who are not proficient (Performance Levels 1, 2, and 3) on the Amira ISIP must be progress-monitored monthly to track academic progress. Headphones with microphones are allowable expenses by Title I-A funding if included in the Title I school’s schoolwide program plan and the Early Literacy Allocation in SEG.
- **Optional and Required Amira ISIP Assess Educator Trainings:** All first-year teachers teaching literacy and math in K–2 are required to attend local or regional Amira trainings. All educators are encouraged to attend training. The SY 2026–27 Amira training and

professional development plan for all Amira assessments will be communicated in the near future. Task details about the Amira ISIP for early literacy are [explained here for each grade level](#).

WIDA Screener for English Learner Identification

The WIDA Screener for Kindergarten and the WIDA Screener for Grades 1–12 are the only PED-approved English language proficiency screening assessments. These screening assessments are part of the English learner identification process for K–12 students entering New Mexico public schools for the first time. To ensure consistent identification procedures, it is critical that district, school, and charter school staff involved with the English learner identification process are properly trained and that practices are aligned with standardized statewide entrance procedures for potential English learners.

Additionally, schools need to ensure the appropriate screener is used. For students with an IEP indicating a *most significant cognitive disability*, the WIDA Alternate Screener would be utilized.

The PED’s Language and Culture Division offers English Learner Identification Process Training, which is available in [Canvas](#). The course is required annually to ensure that district, school, and charter school representatives understand the purpose of the Language Usage Survey (LUS), know how to answer parents’/guardians’ questions about the LUS, provide support to ensure the LUS is presented in a language parents/guardians understand, and avoid the erroneous identification of potential English learners. Please contact Elena Aguilar at elena.aguilar@ped.nm.gov with questions on the English learner identification process and the WIDA Screeners.

Dyslexia Screening for First Grade

Per Section 22-13-32 NMSA 1978, all first-grade students must be screened for dyslexia by the 40th day of school and within two weeks of initial enrollment for students new to New Mexico. The screeners remain the same as last year:

- Teach Me to Read (English screener; printable PDF)
- Lexercise (English screener; student responses are entered online by the teacher; one subtest has a printable PDF; an account must be created on the website)
- Amira ISIP & Amira Evaluar (Spanish Screener, same as ISIP for first grade online)
- IDEL (Spanish screener; printable PDF)

Screener training and printable materials are available in [Canvas](#) as self-paced course modules. For questions related to dyslexia screening requirements, please contact Christy Quesada at christine.quesada@ped.nm.gov.

Gifted Screening for All Students by Third Grade

Per [6.31.3 NMAC: Gifted and Talented Students](#), all New Mexico students should be screened for potential giftedness by the end of the third grade. Each LEA should establish procedures for this universal screening process. For additional information regarding various gifted screeners, assessments, and training, please contact Christopher Vian at christopher.vian@ped.nm.gov.

3–8 Interim Assessment for Mathematics and Language Arts

All districts and charter schools serving grades 3–8 will continue to administer either a locally procured or the [state-provided interim assessment](#) (iMSSA) at the beginning-of-year, middle-of-year, and end-of-

year windows for the purposes of benchmarking student progress. This interim data must be tied to the NM School DASH Annual and 90-Day Plan for all schools. The PED Assessment Bureau will not require LEAs to submit summary interim assessment reports at the end of the year. Please keep in mind the reference to *state-specified* interim assessments for designated schools in CSI and CSI-MRI status on page 2 of this memorandum.

FEDERALLY REQUIRED ESSA ASSESSMENTS

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to assess all students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school to measure academic progress and ensure accountability. Districts and charter schools must follow the [PED test assignment guidelines](#) to meet federal assessment participation rate requirements for student populations.

ACCESS for ELLs

The WIDA ACCESS for English Language Learners (ELLs) meets New Mexico’s federal requirement to provide an annual assessment of academic English language proficiency. It is annually administered to identified English learners in grades K–12. ACCESS for ELLs measures a student’s overall proficiency and progress toward English proficiency in four domains: Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing. The test is based on [WIDA’s English Language Development Standards for K–12](#). For the past several years, WIDA has been revising ACCESS for ELLs (now WIDA ACCESS) and Kindergarten ACCESS for ELLs (now WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten) to align with the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition. WIDA will conduct a standard-setting process in July 2026 to establish new proficiency levels. Beginning in spring 2027, ACCESS scale scores and proficiency levels will be based on the cut scores determined during this standard setting. The PED will keep LEAs informed of any updates to New Mexico cut scores resulting from WIDA’s new cut scores and any additional analysis of state data.

Optional Resource for English Learners

The WIDA MODEL (Measure of Developing English Language) is a suite of English language proficiency assessments for grades K–12. As a flexible, on-demand language proficiency assessment, the WIDA MODEL can be administered at any time during the school year, depending on the needs of the district, school, teacher, or student. The test is based on [WIDA’s English Language Development Standards for K–12](#). The WIDA MODEL can be funded by districts and charter schools using supplemental Title III funds or Title I-A funds, in accordance with a Title I schoolwide program plan or for students identified as eligible under a Title I targeted assistance program.

NM-MSSA

The New Mexico Measures of Student Success and Achievement (NM-MSSA) is New Mexico’s statewide summative assessment for mathematics and language arts and is administered at the end of grades 3–8. The NM-MSSA is designed to measure students’ proficiency in grade-level New Mexico Common Core State Standards.

NM-ASR

The New Mexico Assessment of Science Readiness (NM-ASR) is New Mexico’s statewide summative assessment for science. The standards require the integration of Science and Engineering Practices, Disciplinary Core Ideas, and Crosscutting Concepts to explain phenomena and solve problems. The NM-ASR is designed to measure students’ proficiency in the New Mexico [STEM Ready! Science Standards](#) in grades 5, 8, and 11.

SAT School Day

The SAT is a national assessment developed by the College Board and aligned to New Mexico’s high school academic standards to measure knowledge and skills that can consistently predict a student’s success in college and workforce training programs. All grade 11 students in New Mexico public schools are expected to participate in the spring SAT School Day, except for those students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who take the state’s alternate assessment.

Assessments in Spanish as an Accommodation

Assessments are available in Spanish for NM-MSSA language arts and mathematics and NM-ASR for qualifying English learners. Additionally, high school English learners have the option to take the SAT School Day Spanish Reading & Writing form.

Alternate Assessments for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities

General education assessments (e.g., SAT School Day, NM-MSSA, NM-ASR, ACCESS) are not appropriate for a small population of students identified as students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, as determined by a legal plan. For this special population of students, Dynamic Learning Maps is the alternate assessment to measure math, language arts, and science achievement.

Additionally, if the student is also an English learner, WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is the appropriate test assignment. These assessments are aligned to alternate academic achievement standards that are unique to this population. The student’s Individualized Education Program must indicate placement in alternate assessments for math, English language arts, and science rather than the SAT, MSSA, ASR, and general ACCESS for ELLs assessments.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

Results from the spring 2026 NAEP administration are anticipated to be released in January 2027.

NAEP studies for the upcoming school year are identified on the state assessment calendar. School districts and charter schools selected for the NAEP sample will be notified in early fall.

Neil Tulabing, NAEP State Coordinator, will contact sampled schools no later than July 24, 2026, to provide additional information and next steps.

OTHER CURRICULAR ASSESSMENTS

Avant STAMP

All students enrolled in a state-funded bilingual multicultural education program (BMEP) who have not already tested and achieved language proficiency in the home/heritage language of the BMEP are required to complete the Avant STAMP assessment once per year to measure growth towards language proficiency. The Avant STAMP can also be used in conjunction with either coursework or an alternative process portfolio to demonstrate proficiency for the State Seal of Bilingualism-Biliteracy (SSBB). For a complete list of testable languages, please visit the [Avant STAMP resources page](#). For further information on options to earn the SSBB, please contact Daisy Barnard at daisy.barnard@ped.nm.gov.

Advanced Placement

The PED strongly believes that all students should have equal access to the full benefit of Advanced Placement® (AP) coursework. AP students do college-level work in high school, and if they score a three or higher on the AP exam, they can earn college credit. The PED will again cover a large portion of the exam fee for economically disadvantaged students under the College Board’s AP Exam Fee Reduction guidelines, resulting in a total cost to students of \$3 per exam. The testing window for AP exams is scheduled for May 2027 and will be added to the testing calendar. More information and

deadlines concerning the NM Fee Reduction Program are available at www.APNewMexico.org. For more information on Advanced Placement, please contact Dr. Justin Makemson at justin.makemson@ped.nm.gov.

For general questions about assessment requirements, please contact the Assessment Bureau at PED.Assessment@ped.nm.gov.

MDP

cc: Amanda DeBell, Deputy Secretary of Teaching, Learning, and Innovation
Lynn Vásquez, Senior Manager of Assessment, Research, Evaluation, and Accountability
Breezy Gutierrez, Senior Manager of College and Career Readiness
Elisabeth Peterson, Manager of Priority Schools
Brigette Russell, Ph.D., Interim Division Director, Charter Schools
Mayra Valtierrez, Senior Manager of Language and Culture
Jacqueline Costales, Ed.D., Executive Manager of Curriculum and Instruction
Severo Martinez, Senior Manager of Literacy and Humanities
Shafiq Chaudhary, Senior Manager of Math and Science