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MEMORANDUM

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

FROM: Hanna Skandera *HS*
Secretary-designate, Public Education Department

RE: **ASSESSMENT CHANGES**

Senate Bill 360, signed by Governor Martinez on April 8, 2011, temporarily suspends certain state assessments in the 2011-2012 school year.

We recognize the significant impact that these changes will have on students and school districts. For that reason, we are providing the attached FAQ document to explain those requirements. We will provide additional information on each of these topics in the coming weeks and months.

Please contact a PED Assessment and Evaluation staff member if you need additional assistance with these requirements: Robert Romero, robert.romero1@state.nm.us, (505) 827-6524; Diana Jaramillo, diana.jaramillo@state.nm.us, (505) 827-6570; Charles Trujillo, Charles.Trujillo@state.nm.us, (505) 827-6536.

Frequently Asked Questions

Answers to the following questions are provided to explain changes in state requirements for New Mexico's student assessments.

ASSESSMENTS

Suspend Certain State Assessments in 2011-2012 School Year

QUESTION: What state tests will not be required in 2011-2012?

ANSWER: SB 360 temporarily suspends certain state assessments in 2011-2012 to balance the state budget and reduce general appropriations for state government and public schools.

The following assessments are suspended in the 2011-2012 school year:

- SBA in writing in grades 4, 6, 7, and 11.
- SBA in social studies in grade 11
- College placement test in grade 11
- Workforce readiness assessment in grade 11
- Short-Cycle assessments in grades 9 and 10
- Passing the SBA/High School Graduation Assessment and Alternate Demonstration of Competency

Temporarily suspend requirements to pass SBA/HSGA and the Alternate Demonstration of Competency:

2011-2012 will be a pilot year for the SBA/High School Graduation Assessment (SBA/HSGA) and the Alternate Demonstration of Competency (ADC). Scores from the spring 2011 test will be reported to schools for planning ADCs, though the class of 2012 will not be required to pass the test or the ADC. No SBA/HSGA retests will be available in 2011-2012. The SBA/HSGA will be administered to the class of 2013 in the spring of 2012. The class of 2013 will be the first that must pass the SBA or complete an ADC.

The following assessments are required in the 2011-2012 school year:

- SBA in reading in grades 3 through 8 and 11.
- SBA in writing in grades 3, 5, and 8.
- SBA in mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and 11.
- SBA in science in grades 4, 7, and 11.
- NMAPA in reading/language arts in grades 3 through 8 and 11.
- NMAPA in mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and 11.
- NMAPA in science in grades 4, 7, and 11.
- NMHSCE retesting for students exited from high school
- ACCESS for ELLs assessment for English Language Learners
- NMAPA alternate to NMHSCE retesting for students exited from high school

Standards Based Assessment/High School Graduation Assessment

QUESTION: How will Senate Bill 360 affect the SBA/High School Graduation Assessment?

ANSWER: SB 360 continues SBA/HSGA testing in school year 2011-2012. Statutory requirements for passing the test for high school graduation are suspended for 2011-2012. The PED intends the 2011-2012 year to serve as a statewide pilot so policymakers and school districts can examine SBA/HSGA pass rates and determine their impact on requirements for retesting and preparing Alternate Demonstrations of Competency (ADCs). Students who do not pass the SBA/HSGA in spring 2011 will not be required to retake it in 2011-2012 to get a high school diploma. This will also remove the cost of retesting from school districts in 2011-2012. The class of 2013 (cohort of 10th grade students in 2010-2011) will be the first cohort required to pass the test or complete an acceptable ADC

QUESTION: When is a student required to take the SBA or the NMHSCE?

ANSWER: From 2011-12 on, the NMHSCE will only be a retest for students exited from high school in 2010-2011 and earlier. These students can retake the NMHSCE for five years after exiting high school (winter 2016). Starting in 2010-2011, students must pass the SBA/HSGA for a high school diploma. Elsewhere in this FAQ document, the impact of Senate Bill 360 on SBA/HSGA testing is explained.

QUESTION: What are passing scores on the SBA/HSGA?

ANSWER: Performance standards for the SBA in all tested grades and content areas are being reviewed and adjusted in spring and summer 2011 to ensure that they make accurate measurements of student proficiency for the new test design with 80% multiple choice items and alignment with certain updated assessment frameworks. The same SBA performance levels are used for the High School Graduation Assessment and adequate yearly progress (AYP). Students achieving at least Proficient performance on the SBA/HSGA will pass the test for high school exit. Passing scores for the SBA/HSGA will be set by mid June 2011 and student test scores will be posted online for districts by July 15, 2011. Hardcopy reports will be delivered by August 1, 2011.

QUESTION: How should SBA/HSGA scores be used to identify a student's needs?

ANSWER: The SBA Student Report for Parents provides several types of data on a student's performance. Student achievement is classified in four performance levels based on a scale score. Scale scores pinpoint a student's overall performance in each content area. Scale scores are also used to monitor a student's year-to-year growth. Raw scores for reporting categories (e.g. Algebra and Geometry in math) within a content area are also reported. There are a small number of items and raw score points for reporting categories, so it is not possible to compute a scale score. However, the test vendor will provide a lookup table that will report proficiency levels achieved by a typical student with a certain reporting category raw score. The table will classify raw scores into categories to assist teachers in identifying needs.

QUESTION: When should early graduates take the SBA/HSGA? Should they take it when they are sophomores since their junior year will be their last?

ANSWER: Statute 22-2C-4, NMSA 1978, established New Mexico's norm for administering

academic assessments for adequate yearly progress (AYP). The statute states that the SBA will be given in grade eleven in mathematics, reading and language arts, social studies, writing, and in one high school grade in science. Grade 11 was selected for the science assessment in high school.

New Mexico's high school graduation assessment requirement has broader application to all high school grade levels. Statute 22-13-1.1, (M), NMSA 1978, specifies that a student shall not receive a New Mexico diploma of excellence without demonstrating competence in math, reading and language arts, writing, social studies and science based on a standards-based assessment or a portfolio of standards-based indicators. If a student exits school at the end of grade twelve without satisfying those requirements, the student shall receive a certificate of completion indicating earned coursework credits. The statute applies to a variety of circumstances in which a student might not be in grade 11 and must pass the test for a diploma. Local districts should identify students such as these as early as possible so they may have opportunities to retest prior to high school exit.

QUESTION: Will scores for early graduates be counted for AYP?

ANSWER: U.S. Department of Education guidance specifies that students take a state accountability assessment during high school. Many different timelines for completing high school graduation requirements, including taking the SBA/HSGA, are possible. In order to satisfy federal requirements, a student's scores on the SBA/HSGA will be counted for AYP participation, and if they are FAY students, also for proficiency, when their graduation cohort's grade 11 results are used for AYP. Student test scores will be stored in a database until they are applied to AYP.

QUESTION: Will returning dropout students be required to take the SBA/HSGA, and will their scores be included in AYP?

ANSWER: An increased number of dropout students are returning to high school in New Mexico. In some cases, students left school many years ago. These students must meet graduation requirements of the year in which they would have graduated. Students required to take the SBA/HSGA when they return to school will not be counted for AYP, according to U.S. Department of Education guidance. That is, these students will not be counted for AYP if their cohort has already graduated from high school.