

BULLDOG BARKS

Santa Maria Middle School
Attitude + Attendance + Achievement = Success

From the Principal's Desk

Proactively help with Test Preparation.

You want your child to learn essential skills, so he or she can confidently advance through school. Not to mention, you don't want your child to feel any unnecessary anxiety!

That's why it's important to help your child master skills and prepare for the testing format.

Here are some practical ways you can do that, if your child:

- Struggles with any skills, make sure your child is getting proactive help and/or extra practice.
- Is working on a homework assignment that has multiple-choice questions, make sure he or she understands the answer format.
- Is working on homework with written responses, make sure your child can write out complete sentences (as may be expected on a standardized test).
- Gets stressed out when taking tests, seek out programs that can build your child's confidence with test taking.

Reassure your child to relieve his or her fears.

Standardized tests can give some kids (and adults) a lot of anxiety!

Remind your child that a standardized test is nothing to be afraid of.

Explain that the state test is designed to help your child's school determine who may need additional help.

SYLVAN LEARNING

Arizona students will take the state test, called the AzM2, for the first time since 2019 this spring, starting in April. State letter grades typically hinge on those test results. Governor Ducey also signed an executive order requiring education officials to study state exam results to assess how students have fared academically amid intermittent closures because of COVID-19.

The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) acknowledges that the Spring 2021 Test Administration may be challenging for some families. Here is some guidance regarding in-person testing:

1. Who will be taking the test?

The AzM2 must be administered in-person to all students enrolled in grades 3 – 8 and grade 10 (Cohort 2023). AzSCI must be administered to all students enrolled in grades 5, 8, and 11 (Cohort 2022). AZELLA will be administered to K-8 students learning English language. This includes all students who attend school at the building site and all students who are learning virtually (distance learning, online learning, hybrid models). ADE does not have any testing exemptions as these requirements are clearly outlined in State laws and Federal requirements.

2. What tests will my student take?

• **The Arizona English Learner Assessment (AZELLA)** is a language proficiency standards based assessment that measures the language proficiency of students. The AZELLA assesses the student's English Language proficiency in the following four domains: Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking. It meets state and federal requirements and the results provide information to schools and teachers to determine appropriate instruction, measure progress toward English language proficiency, and when the student no longer needs to receive English language support.

• **AzM2** is the statewide achievement test. Arizona public school students in Grades 3 through 8 and sophomore cohort students (Cohort 2023) will take AzM2 assessment in English Language Arts and Mathematics at their grade level.

• **AzSCI** is the statewide achievement test for Science. Arizona public school students in Grades 5, 8 and 11 (Cohort 2022) will take AzSCI. AIMS Science will **not** be administered in Spring 2021.

• ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

The Multi-State Alternate Assessment is designed specifically for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

MSAA is administered to eligible students in the areas of ELA and Mathematics in Grades 3 – 8 and 11.

It was designed to incorporate many built-in supports such as: Built-In Supports • Entire test can be read aloud • Visual Supports • Limited number of answer choice options • Reduced text complexity-thoughtful adaptations of passages

3. When would my students have to come to school for the tests?

April 12th-April 21st AzM2 for 6th, 7th and 8th grade and AzSCI for 8th grade only
March 29th-April 1st AZELLA Testing for 6th, 7th and 8th grade SMMS Hybrid

4. If I don't feel comfortable sending my child to in-person testing, what happens?

Students not coming in person to test will receive work assignments from their teachers to complete on their own.

5. Would my student have to wear a school uniform?

No, students won't have to wear a school uniform but they need to follow a dress code. Information will be posted on the school website.

6. Would there be transportation available?

Transportation is very limited. We are asking parents to bring and pick up their students.

The latest information from CDC regarding COVID-19 School Benchmarks

Maricopa County is at the Substantial Transmission Level. The actual learning delivery recommendations for elementary schools can be in hybrid learning or reduced attendance.

COVID-19 School Benchmarks

Community Transmission By Arizona County

This guidance outlines recommendations for K-12 schools to prepare for and respond to community spread of COVID-19 based on CDC's K-12 [Operational Strategy](#) and [Indicators for Dynamic School Decision Making](#), and Arizona Department of Education's [Roadmap to Reopening Schools](#). LEAs are encouraged to continue to partner with their [local health department](#).

County	Case Rate	% Positivity	Transmission Level
Apache	Substantial	Low	Substantial
Cochise	Substantial	Moderate	Substantial
Coconino	High	Low	High
Gila	Substantial	Moderate	Substantial
Graham	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Greenlee	Substantial	Moderate	Substantial
La Paz	Substantial	Low	Substantial
Maricopa	Substantial	Moderate	Substantial
Mohave	Substantial	Substantial	Substantial
Navajo	High	Low	High
Pima	Substantial	Low	Substantial
Pinal	High	Moderate	High
Santa Cruz	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Yavapai	Substantial	Moderate	Substantial
Yuma	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

For additional information & the schools dashboard, visit azhealth.gov/schoolsCOVID19.

Updated: 3/3/2021

COVID-19 School Benchmarks

Indicators & Learning Delivery Recommendations

Community Transmission to Reflect Level of Community Risk

The first step in determining when and how to safely reopen schools involves assessing community transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. CDC recommends the use of two measures of community burden to determine the level of community transmission. These measures are used to assess the incidence and spread of COVID-19 in the community, not the school itself. Risk is dependent on community level transmission and implementation of school and community mitigation strategies.

Indicator	Low Transmission	Moderate Transmission	Substantial Transmission	High Transmission
Total new cases per 100,000 persons in the last 7 days	0 - 9	10 - 49	50 - 99	≥ 100
Percentage of nucleic acid amplification tests (NAATs) that are positive during the past 7 days	<5.0%	5.0% - 7.9%	8.0% - 9.9%	≥ 10.0%

Recommended Implementation of Mitigation Strategies and K-12 School Learning Modes by Level of Community Transmission

Low Transmission	Moderate Transmission	Substantial Transmission	High Transmission
K-12 schools open for full in-person instruction	Elementary schools in hybrid learning mode or reduced attendance	Middle and high schools in hybrid learning mode or reduced attendance	Middle and high schools in virtual instruction unless they can strictly implement all mitigation strategies and have few cases. Schools that are already open for in-person instruction with successfully implemented mitigation strategies can remain open, but only if they continue to strictly implement mitigation strategies and have few cases

For detailed mitigation strategies and remarks see the K-12 School Guidance for COVID-19.

For additional information & the schools dashboard, visit azhealth.gov/schoolsCOVID19.

Updated: 3/3/2021

MAKING THE BEST OF OUR VIRTUAL EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



Ms. Lory Banelos: Being a first year teacher, I was a little worried about how I was going to be teaching virtually. I was concerned I was not going to be able to form connections with the kids and that I wouldn't be able to give them the time and attention they need and deserve. Turns out, I had nothing to worry about. Virtual learning lets the kids be more themselves because we all feel a little bit safer behind a screen. The shy kids get to privately message me when they need help and the social kids get to socialize without much disruption to the class and I get to know their personalities better this way. Though it is tough not knowing if they are following along, or seeing their facial expressions or body language and figuring out if they need help, this has taught them to advocate for themselves. This may not be the ideal situation for a first year teacher, but I am making the best of virtual learning.

Mrs. Emma Banelos: Even though online learning scared me at the beginning, now I can say it has helped me to face my fears to be on camera, besides others. Online learning is a challenge due to the fact that it was not in my routine, but now I can say I like it. I can't wait to teach in person but for now I am looking for new ways and methods to help the students to do their best. As you can see, online learning is making us get our best from technology, students, and staff for our own good.

