



Network News

Your Arizona Parent School Connection



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State Assessments and the Special Learner

by Dr. Leila Williams

Testing season will soon be upon us! High school students will begin testing in the Fall of 2010 followed by elementary students in the Spring of 2011. Federal law requires that *all* students participate in state assessments, it is important to make sure parents are aware of what students need to perform at their best.



Students will either take Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) or AIMS Alternative (AIMS-A). AIMS is the test that measures the state content standards that Arizona teachers use for instruction.

AIMS-A is the state assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities which measures the state's alternate content standards. *A Parent's Guide to Understanding AIMS-A* is available online in both English and Spanish at www.azed.gov/ess/DAS/aims-a. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team, of which parents are a member, will determine which assessment is appropriate for the student. Students may have a list of standard accommodations used in classroom instruction that can also be used in AIMS testing.

Students prepare all year long for AIMS by participating in grade-level class instruction. For students to perform optimally on AIMS, he or she should get adequate sleep on nights before testing. In addition, students should eat a balanced breakfast and remember to relax during testing.

After your student has completed AIMS or AIMS-A testing, he/she will receive one of the following scores for each of the four areas tested: reading, writing, mathematics, and science.

- Exceeds the Standard: denotes superior academic performance
- Meets the Standard: denotes solid academic performance
- Approaches the Standard: denotes partial understanding of the skills and knowledge for proficient work at grade level
- Falls Far Below the Standard: denotes insufficient understanding of the prerequisite skills; students who achieve at this level have serious gaps and may require mediation

The data derived from AIMS and from AIMS-A is used to guide instruction and to measure school performance.

Parents can find the content standards that AIMS and AIMS-A assess on the Arizona Department of Education's website, as well as some sample test items and testing dates. The website is www.azed.gov/aims. If you have questions about testing in the State of Arizona, please call the assessment section at (602) 542-5031.

Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council

by Barb Ross

Governor Jan Brewer established the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC) by an Executive Order enacted on September 3, 2009. The DDPC is a state affiliated organization created to meet the requirements in the 2004 Public Law 106-402, also known as the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. The former entity known as the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities was allowed to sunset on July 1, 2009.

The DDPC's mission is to represent the interests and needs of persons with developmental disabilities through attention directed towards those who are unserved or underserved throughout the state. The DDPC strives to achieve the spirit of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance Act by promoting productivity, independence, inclusion, and self-determination to support persons with developmental disabilities and their families in all facets of community life.

The Developmental Disabilities Assistance Act has specific requirements for the membership of the DDPC. Sixty percent of the members of each council shall consist of individuals with developmental disabilities, parents or guardians of children with developmental disabilities, or immediate relatives or guardians of adults with developmental disabilities who cannot advocate for themselves. The council shall also include representatives of the Division of Developmental Disabilities, State entities that administer funds provided under Federal laws related to individuals with disabilities (Arizona Department of Education), the University Centers of Excellence in developmental disabilities (University of Arizona and Northern Arizona University), the State protection and advocacy system for persons with developmental disabilities (Arizona Center for Disability Law), and representatives of local nongovernmental agencies and private nonprofit groups concerned with services for individuals with developmental disabilities. Members of the Council are appointed at the discretion of the Governor and serve staggered three-year terms. For more information visit: www.azgovernor.gov/DDPC/Members.asp.

The DDPC developed a five year state plan after careful assessment of needs and research, using the data to write goals and objectives. The goals and objectives provide a roadmap to guide activities. The DDPC is engaged in a number of projects; to learn more about these activities and how to get involved, visit their website at: www.azgovernor.gov/DDPC.

The Transition Planning Process

by Amy Dill

IDEA 2004 300.320(b) states that transition services must be in place, “beginning not later than the first Individualized Education Program (IEP) to be in effect when the child turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP Team...” Many families are confused when they hear the words, “transition planning process;” however, transition services can be fairly easy to understand when the required components are explained. Transition services are an extremely important part of the IEP and provide a written road map for success after a student leaves high school.

The transition planning process begins with one of the required IEP transition components—age-appropriate transition assessments. Assessments are completed to identify the strengths, interests, and preferences of the student.



Age-appropriate assessments can be found for all cognitive abilities, and can be formal or informal. The family can provide valuable information in this area through interviews and social histories. Assessments may be conducted at any time as a student’s strengths, interests, and preferences could change.

The results from the age-appropriate assessments are used to develop another required IEP transition component, the measurable postsecondary goals. These goals state what the student wants to achieve after high school in the areas of education or training, employment, and when appropriate, independent living skills. The student will work toward these annually updated goals.



Another required IEP transition component, the coordinated set of activities assists the student in achieving their measurable postsecondary goals. These coordinated services (or steps in the plan to move toward adult life) document the efforts between school, family, and student, as well as other appropriate agencies and support programs. These activities can fall in the areas of instruction, community experiences, employment, adult living, and if appropriate, daily living skills, functional/vocational, and related services. At least one activity must support a measurable postsecondary goal. Activities can be performed on or off campus, and are not restricted to school hours. The coordinated set of activities should include desired outcomes, implementation dates, and who is responsible for implementation.

The next required IEP transition component, the courses of study, looks at the student’s school day. The courses of study outline the student’s classes and includes at least one class, or classes, that align to the student’s measurable postsecondary goals. The courses of study is very important, it enables the student’s education program to become relevant and meaningful, and also helps to motivate the student to complete his/her high school education.



Other required IEP transition components includes: the alignment of at least one annual IEP goal to support each measurable postsecondary goal, the invitation of the student to the IEP meeting, and the transfer of rights to the student at age 18. The final transition component is the invitation of representatives of any participating agency(ies). Outside agencies, or anyone that has additional information about the student, can be invited by the family or school to the transition meeting to ensure that the safety net of supports and services are in place for the student before graduation. If the school invites any outside agency, prior written consent must be obtained from the parent or the student who has reached the age of majority.

If you are interested in learning more about the transition planning process, be sure to download the Clearinghouse documents *Transition Planning Process (TR14)* and *Measurable Postsecondary Goals (TR15)* available online at www.azed.gov/ess/pinspals. TR14 provides a visual of the transition planning process, while TR15 illustrates the direct relationship between the other components of the transition process to the measurable postsecondary goal. For additional information, attend the Parent Information Network (PIN) training, *Beginning with the End in Mind*. To request or attend trainings contact your regional PIN Specialist, listed on page 4. Parents or other interested individuals can find trainings in their area by visiting the event calendar on the Enhancing Arizona’s Parent Networks (EAPN) website at www.azeapn.org.

Arizona Career Information System: Your Online Transition Toolbox

by Amy Dill

Are you unsure of how to start the transition planning process? Are you looking for an easy, convenient way to explore the required transition components? The Arizona Department of Education has the answer: AzCIS. Arizona Career Information System, or AzCIS, is an online system designed to provide educational, career, and occupational information to help students make better-informed career and school choices.



Students can use AzCIS to identify their strengths, preferences, and interests. Assessments available on AzCIS are designed to help students learn about themselves through a series of questions. The system uses these answers to match the student’s interest preferences to occupations they may

enjoy. These occupations can then be explored by accessing the site's detailed descriptions of over 500 occupations with current regional, state, and national labor market data.

Information about wages, licensing requirements, physical demands, skills, and abilities are provided for each occupation, as well as many real-world videos from people working in the field. Related occupations are also listed to further explore career options for students of all ability levels.

Students can also use AzCIS to determine what types of education and/or training is required for their chosen profession. Detailed information regarding military employment, Arizona's higher education institutions, apprenticeship programs, and technical and trade schools is provided, as well as a sortable database of over 60,000 scholarship award possibilities. Financial aid information, including links to financial aid websites and information on state and federal programs are also available on AzCIS.

Once students think they have found the perfect job, the use of the "Reality Check" feature should be encouraged. This activity matches their chosen lifestyle to the occupation they have chosen. Can the bills be paid? Can the student afford the housing and amenities they desire? The answers can be surprising...and eye-opening.

AzCIS can be found at <http://azcis.intocareers.org>. AzCIS is available free to all Arizona residents. A username and password will be needed for entrance into the site. These can be obtained by contacting your child's counselor or teacher, or by calling Kay Schreiber, State School Counselors Supervisor at 602-542-5353.

The 20th Anniversary of Americans with Disabilities Act

by Barb Ross



On July 26, 1990, President George H. Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to ensure the civil rights of people with disabilities. The ADA is one of the most comprehensive compilations of rights for persons with disabilities in the United States (US). More than fifty-eight million people in the US have some kind of physical, cognitive, sensory, developmental, or mental disability. Nearly every individual or family at one time or another will have the experience of dealing with a disability.

The ADA came about after national research reported significant discrimination existed for individuals with disabilities in areas of housing, public accommodations, education, transportation, communication, recreation, health services, voting, and access to public services and individuals who experienced discrimination on the basis of disability often had no legal recourse to redress such discrimination. This discrimination denied people with disabilities the opportunity to compete on an equal basis and to pursue the same opportunities afforded other individuals costing the United

States billions of dollars in unnecessary expenses resulting from dependency practices.

The ADA has been instrumental in increasing the opportunities for persons with disabilities by providing the provisions outlined in Title I: Employment, Title II: State and local governments, Title III: Public accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications.

A person with a disability is defined under the ADA as an individual who:

1. has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or
2. has a record or history of such an impairment; or
3. is perceived or regarded as having such impairment.

The term "major life activities" means functions such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. The determination of whether or not the impairment substantially limits a major life activity is made on an individual basis, and is not based on the existence of a condition or impairment but rather by its impact on the individual.

The National ADA Symposium has invited state and local governments, schools and colleges, business, organizations, service providers, and advocates to join their "Proclamation of Recommitment" to the spirit of ADA. The list of entities as well as activities that recognize the 20th anniversary is posted on the website www.2010anniversary.org. If you would like more information on the ADA visit: www.ada.gov.

Traveling the Special Education Highway
A Parent's Guide to a Successful Journey

Parent Information Network
Arizona Department of Education
Exceptional Student Services
1-877-230-PINS
www.azed.gov/ess/pins/pals
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Traveling the Special Education Highway
A Parent's Guide to a Successful Journey

- ◆ What if you do not agree with the evaluation conducted by the school?
- ◆ What is meant by parental consent?
- ◆ When should you be notified about changes to your child's services?

Want answers to these questions and more, contact the Parent Information Network and request a copy of *Traveling the Special Education Highway* or log-on to www.azed.gov/ess/pins/pals and download a copy.

Parent Information Network
Arizona Department of Education
877-230-PINS (7467)

Annual Performance Report Public Reporting

According to the federal regulations that implement the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA '04) at 34 C.F.R. §300.602, State Education Agencies (SEAs) are required to make the State Performance Plan (SPP) available through public means, including the media. The SPP indicates how they plan to implement the provisions of Part B (children age 3-22) of the Act. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has identified twenty indicators they believe provides information (data) that is considered essential to ensure the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to students determined eligible for special education services. In addition, each state is also required to submit and make public an Annual Performance Report (APR) which shows the progress towards the twenty indicators. Using the data submitted by public education agencies (PEAs), reports showing their performance on many of the twenty indicators are prepared and then publicly reported. The Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2008 SPP, APR, and public reports can be found at <http://www.ade.az.gov/ess/> under Resources/State Performance Plan and School Year 2008-09 Public Reports.

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