March 4, 2015

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Next month, Deer Valley Unified School District students, along with students across the state, will embark on a new statewide achievement test. AzMERIT, Arizona's Measurement of Educational Readiness to Inform Teaching, will replace the former state assessment, AIMS. Students in grades 3-8 will take the AzMERIT state assessment in Writing, Reading, and Mathematics. Students in grades 9-11 English Language Arts, Algebra 1-2, Geometry, and Algebra 3-4 courses will take AzMERIT End-of-Course Assessments. Teachers, staff and administrators have been preparing diligently to ensure our schools have a smooth transition and successful administration of the AzMERIT state assessments.

DVUSD will be administering the AzMERIT state assessments between April 7th and May 8th of this school year. As individual students will be scheduled for testing on approximately 3 different days, specific school and teacher testing schedules will be posted on school websites prior to spring break, at the end of March. In addition, DVUSD is keeping parents and the community informed about the AzMERIT tests, with further information available on the district website at http://dvusd.schoolwires.net/Page/31740 .

The technology advancements at your students' school will allow them to administer the AzMERIT state tests via computer. This is exciting news in preparing our students to succeed in our technology rich world, and we look forward to using this new method of state testing. In preparation for the AzMERIT state assessment, all students using the computer based platform will need access to headphones/earbuds. DVUSD will provide students with headphones for testing, though we understand parents (or students) prefer that students use their own. If students will be using their own headphones/earbuds for testing, please ensure your child's name is on the item when brought to school.

The AzMERIT state assessment, as well at the Arizona College and Career Ready standards, provide students the opportunity to utilize their critical thinking and problem solving skills. In addition, the AzMERIT state assessment will expose students to new types of test questions, different than traditional multiple choice items. Teachers are confidently preparing students with the knowledge and skills to succeed, and many parents have asked what they can do for their child. Here are a few ways to help your child prepare for the AzMERIT state assessment:

- You can ask your child more open-ended questions throughout the day. Encourage your child to think critically in everyday life, such as when you are in the grocery store or at the dinner table. Ask more "why" questions and let them know it is okay if they don't answer right away. Problem-solving takes time.
- Experience the test questions with your child prior to the testing in April. These test questions will model the way a student will navigate a computer based test and do not necessarily represent the content they will need to know. Sample tests can help our students immensely as they practice with new items, especially in the comfort of their own home.   Sample tests can be accessed via the AzMERIT portal at azmeritportal.org.
- Before the test, make sure your child eats a healthy breakfast, gets a lot of rest and comes to school prepared and comfortable to take this test. Throughout the year, the best preparation for the state assessment is for students to fully engage each day in the quality instruction provided by all our DVUSD teachers.

If you have any questions about the new assessment, please be sure to contact your school office.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gayle Galligan
Associate Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Graduating lifelong learners who will successfully compete, lead, and positively impact the world.