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GOVERNOR

August 4, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents, Charter School Administrators, District Test Coordinators

FROM: Mariana D. Padilla, Secretary of Public Education Initial
MDP

RE: **Early Years Literacy Assessment Benchmark, Screening and Progress Monitoring Reminders**

This memorandum summarizes current New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) policy requirements and district responsibilities to ensure consistent administration of the Amira Reading Assessment across New Mexico schools.

Why a Common Statewide Assessment Matters

New Mexico requires the use of a common statewide early literacy assessment to ensure that student results are measured consistently across all public schools. Using a standardized assessment allows educators and PED to generate comparable statewide data, monitor trends in student achievement and growth, identify schools and student groups needing additional support, and evaluate the impact of statewide literacy initiatives. While districts may use additional local assessments to inform instruction, a common statewide assessment provides a shared measure that supports consistency, transparency, accountability, and equitable educational decision-making.

State Assessment Requirements

Consistent with the PED's [School Year 2026–27 Assessment Program Requirements Memorandum](#), all public school districts and charter schools serving early literacy grades are expected to:

- Administer the Amira Reading Assessment to all kindergarten through grade two students during the Beginning-of-Year (BOY), Middle-of-Year (MOY), and End-of-Year (EOY) benchmark windows.

- Conduct monthly progress monitoring for students identified as needing additional literacy support—students performing in levels 1, 2, and 3.
- Provide a minimum of 30 minutes of Amira tutoring a week for all students.
- Utilize assessment results to inform instruction, intervention, or acceleration within a Multi-Layered System of Supports (MLSS).

Why Amira Uses Voice Recording

Amira includes a voice-recording feature because the assessment measures oral reading fluency (ORF), which requires students to read aloud. Including ORF provides a more holistic picture of early literacy than assessments that rely only on silent or receptive responses because it captures how well a student can apply foundational reading skills while reading connected text aloud. The recording allows the system to evaluate important aspects of reading, such as accuracy, rate, and fluency, and also supports score verification when needed.

How Teachers Use Voice Recordings

When retained, student voice recordings may be used by teachers and other authorized school personnel to review a student's oral reading performance as part of the assessment validation process. Listening to a student's reading can help educators confirm scoring when appropriate, observe patterns in reading accuracy, fluency, pacing, expression, and self-corrections, and better understand the specific skills a student has mastered or is still developing. These insights can help inform classroom instruction, targeted interventions, and progress monitoring. Recordings are intended to supplement—not replace—teacher observation, classroom assessment, and professional judgment.

District Authority Regarding Voice Recording Retention

The PED emphasizes that Amira is intended to complement—not replace—teacher observation, classroom assessment, and professional judgment. With the highest regards to student safety and data privacy, this guidance recognizes the role of local decision-making while ensuring that all schools meet state testing requirements and that validated assessment results are preserved for educational use and accountability purposes. Please note the following:

- **All voice recordings are deleted monthly. This is the standardized practice for the 2026-27SY.**
- **Districts and charter schools may request different retentions intervals** after Amira assessments have been administered and assessment results have been validated. Deletion of data daily, weekly, or at the end of the year are district options. To request a deletion period other than monthly, please refer to the instructions in the non-standard retention and options form linked in the next section of this memorandum.

Amira Non-standard Data Retention, Paper-based Amira, and Alternative Assessment Requests

To support local decision-making, the PED has developed this [Amira Non-standard Data Retention and Administration Options request form](#). The document outlines the available options for districts and charter schools that elect to implement different data retention practices, Amira paper-based administration, or alternative assessment programs that differ from the standard statewide Amira administration model. Local education agencies choosing one of these options should complete the applicable sections and submit the form to PED.Assessment@ped.nm.gov.

Supports for Parent Communication

The PED encourages districts to proactively communicate with families regarding the purpose of the assessment and the protections in place for student information. Providing families with clear local policy information promotes transparency and confidence in statewide literacy initiatives. The PED provides the following state resources for districts to utilize:

- [PED Amira Guidance Document](#)
- [Amira Fact Sheet](#)
- [Amira Family Letter](#)

Student Privacy and Data Security

Student information collected through the Amira Reading Assessment remains subject to all applicable federal and state privacy requirements, including:

- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA);
- Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), where applicable;
- Applicable New Mexico student and personal privacy statutes and rules; and
- Contractual data security requirements established by the PED.

The PED requires and expects all vendors supporting statewide assessments to maintain rigorous cybersecurity protections and data governance practices. Amira's specific data privacy policies are in [the Amira Data Privacy document available here](#).

Additional Resources

Districts are encouraged to review:

- [School Year 2026–27 Assessment Program Requirements Memorandum](#)
- [PED Amira ISIP Guidance NMPED's Artificial Intelligence Guidance for Schools](#)
- [Amira Data Privacy Documentation](#)
- [Amira Technical Guide; Section 10 Security and Privacy Policies](#)
- [Amira Technology for Students with Diverse Speech White Paper](#)

Parent Refusals

As a reminder, the PED does not provide for parental opt-outs from state-required assessments or other educational programs and services that are required by law or department policy. These assessments and services are supported through state resources to ensure that every eligible student has equitable access to high-quality educational opportunities and the supports necessary to promote academic success.

However, the PED recognizes that local school leaders may receive requests from families seeking to decline participation. While local education agencies are responsible for addressing these situations in accordance with applicable federal and state law, department policy, and local procedures, the PED encourages districts and schools to engage families in clear, transparent communication regarding the purpose of these assessments and services, the educational benefits they provide, and the importance of broad student participation in supporting both individual student learning and continuous improvement across New Mexico's public education system.

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These policies and guidance are effective for the 2026-27 SY and only apply to K-2 early literacy requirements, as PED will be selecting new assessments for the 2027-28 SY. More information on this process is forthcoming.

For questions regarding this memorandum, please contact PED.Assessment@ped.nm.gov or Lynn.Vasquez@ped.nm.gov.