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August 24, 2015

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Public School Superintendents, High School Principals, Charter School Administrators, Directors of State Education Institutions, Special Education Directors, and District Test Coordinators

**FROM:** Leighann C. Lenti, Deputy Secretary for Policy and Program

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lenti", is written over the "FROM:" line.

**RE: GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS FOR 2016**

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Per NMSA section 22-13-1.1 established in 2008, students must demonstrate competency in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies to earn a New Mexico diploma of excellence. Beginning with the graduating class of 2016, students will use assessments aligned with Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to meet graduation requirements in English language arts (ELA, which includes reading and writing) and mathematics. The required assessments and passing scores differ depending on the graduation option as outlined below.

**Standard Graduation Option** – The standard graduation option, which includes the majority of New Mexico students, requires completion of twenty-four credits of specifically-delineated coursework and demonstration of competency according to statute. Students must meet state-established passing scores for required assessments which include the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) in reading, writing, and math, the Standards Based Assessment (SBA) in science, and an End-of-Course exam (EoC) in social studies. Because this cohort is transitioning from the SBA in reading and math to PARCC, they may demonstrate competency for graduation using either assessment. Flexibility to use a writing EoC is also permitted for this graduating year. Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), 504 Plans, or who are English Learners (ELs) may use approved accommodations on the assessments to help them meet established passing scores.

The primary demonstrations of competency for the graduating class of 2016 are as follows:

- **Reading:** Pass PARCC ELA Grade 11 with a performance level of 3<sup>1</sup> or pass SBA Reading in with 1137 or 2273 composite (reading + math)
- **Math:** Pass PARCC Algebra II *OR* Geometry with a performance level of 3<sup>1</sup> or pass SBA Math with 1137 or 2273 composite (reading + math)
- **Writing:** Pass PARCC ELA Grade 11 (2015) with a performance level of 3<sup>1</sup> or pass one writing EoC
- **Science:** Pass SBA with 1138
- **Social Studies:** Pass one social studies EoC

To meet these requirements, students may retake the PARCC assessments in November/December 2015 and, if needed, for five additional years to earn a diploma. Students who do not meet passing scores on the primary demonstration of competency may use the alternate demonstration of competency (ADC). The ADC consists of EoCs, College and Career Readiness (CCR) indicators, and local ADCs according to NMAC 6.19.7.10. However, in order to implement the ADC, students must meet the attempt requirements listed below:

- **Reading and Math:** State accountability assessment (SBA and/or PARCC) 3 times<sup>2</sup>
- **Writing:** State accountability assessment (PARCC) 1 time
- **Science:** State accountability assessment (SBA Science) 2 times before implementing the ADC
- **Social Studies:** One New Mexico EoC 1 time before implementing the ADC

**Career Graduation Option** – The career graduation option is for special education students who, for reason explained in their IEP, cannot complete the traditional program of study during high school. Students may be placed on the career graduation option by the IEP team from the time they are sixteen years of age until twenty days into their final year of high school. These students must complete twenty-four credits of coursework as defined by the IEP team, four of which must be in career technology courses; demonstration of competency in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies; and full coverage of the career readiness standards and benchmarks outlined in NMAC 2.29.3.8. Students on the career option take similar assessments as those on the standard option, but their IEP team may set passing scores for all assessments. There are two primary differences in the assessment program: 1) students on the career option have the ability to retake the SBA in reading and math in fall 2015, and 2) these students may meet an IEP-set passing scores on the PARCC *Algebra I* assessment. This allowance reflects the reality that many students on the career option do not take higher level math courses during high school.

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<sup>1</sup> Like the SBA, PED will establish specific PARCC scale scores to meet graduation competency requirements.

<sup>2</sup> 2016 seniors took the SBA as sophomores in spring 2014, PARCC as juniors in spring 2015, and optional PARCC retests as seniors in fall 2015.

The primary demonstrations of competency for the 2016 cohort on the career graduation option are as follows:

- **Reading**: Meet individualized passing score on the SBA Reading with an option for fall 2015 retest *OR* meet individualized passing score on PARCC ELA Grade 11
- **Math**: Meet individualized passing score on the SBA Math with an option for fall 2015 retest *OR* meet individualized passing score on any high school level PARCC math test (Algebra I, Geometry, or Algebra II)
- **Writing**: Meet individualized passing score on PARCC ELA Grade 11 or meet individualized passing scores on one writing EoC
- **Science**: Meet individualized passing score on SBA Science
- **Social Studies**: Meet individualized passing score on one social studies EoC

Students on the career option who do not meet passing scores on the primary demonstration of competency may use the ADC after completing the same attempt requirements as students on the standard graduation option.

**Ability Graduation Option** – The ability graduation option is for students with severe and pervasive cognitive disabilities that affect them at home, in school, and in the community. Students on the ability option complete special education classes with coursework totaling twenty-four credits, and demonstrate competency in the five required subjects according to their own ability. They take alternate assessments and their IEP team may set passing scores. Alternate assessments include National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC), a CCSS-aligned assessment in ELA and math first administered in 2015, and the New Mexico Alternate Performance Assessment (NMAPA) in science and social studies. If these students met their individualized passing scores in ELA and math on NMAPA prior to 2015, they may use those passing scores towards graduation.

- **ELA (Reading and Writing)**: Meet individualized passing score on NCSC or NMAPA ELA.
- **Math**: Meet individualized passing score on NCSC or NMAPA Math.
- **Science**: Meet individualized passing score on NMAPA Science
- **Social Studies**: Meet individualized passing score on NMAPA Social Studies

Students on the ability option who do not meet individualized passing scores on the primary demonstration of competency may use a local ADC after attempting NCSC and/or NMAPA twice.

For additional questions about graduation options, please contact Joslyn Overby ([joslyn.overby@state.nm.us](mailto:joslyn.overby@state.nm.us) or 505-827-6570).

LL/jo