

Sequoia Choice Times - Academic Center Edition

Sequoia Choice—
Arizona Distance
Learning



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Jan/Feb 2015

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Our mission is to provide a caring environment of high expectations, individualized attention, and great teaching via a distance learning delivery system that is sufficiently adaptable to help K-12 students in traditional and non-traditional educational settings achieve their maximum academic potential and life goals.

Dear Students and Families,

Welcome to 2015! I would like to congratulate each of you who worked so hard the first semester. There are wonderful stories of student success. Many of our students demonstrated hard-work, dedication and tenacity. The fall semester was a job well-done by many.

I would also like to welcome each of our new students and their families. Our school is always blessed by the many new students that join us each January. We are excited that you have chosen Sequoia Choice Arizona Distance Learning. We will do our best to serve you, and to individualize your educational experience as much as possible.

This spring we will be experiencing the new Arizona state test for the first time. The AZMerit test is designed to test students based on their course enrollment rather than their grade level. We are looking forward to the data this test will provide because we feel it will allow us to better serve each individual student. On the flip side, this test is new to the state and us. Because of this newness, we are expecting some bumps along the way. As information about the test becomes available we will pass it along to you via this newsletter and through your advisors, teachers and academic coaches.

As always remember that on-going and open communication can only improve your experience with our school. Please contact anyone of our staff members if you feel we can be of assistance.

Warm Regards,

Cindy Chleborad
Principal
Sequoia Choice Arizona Distance Learning

McKinney-Vento Information

Attention Students and Families!

Is your family living in one of the following situations?

- In a motel or campground due to lack of an alternative adequate accommodation
- In a shelter
- In a car, park, abandoned building, or bus or train station
- Doubled up with other people due to loss of housing or economic hardship

Counselor's Corner

Seniors: Graduation and Financial Aid

We are already halfway through the year. How time flies! Graduation is just around the corner and it will be here sooner than you think.

You should have received an e-mail from me the first week of the semester regarding graduation. I also sent a letter with your report cards. It is very important that you make sure you are on track for graduation! Call or e-mail your advisors if you have questions about your graduation progress.

Arizona will hold a College Goal weekend on February 6 – 8. You can meet with college reps, get help with your FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), and find out more about schools. Check out <http://www.collegegoalsunday.com/cgs/index.html> for more information, times, and locations.

If you plan to continue your schooling next year, you must submit your FAFSA *right away*. Sit down with your parents and fill it out. The FAFSA is important because it's the only way you can receive financial aid for post-secondary (i.e. post-high school) schooling. Remember, financial aid is different than scholarships. Scholarships are based on merit, whereas financial aid is based on financial need.

A couple of weeks after filing your FAFSA, you will receive notice of what is called your EFC, or Expected Family Contribution. This is how much you and your family can reasonably be expected to pay for your schooling next school year. Naturally, the lower your EFC, the better. Schools then take your EFC to determine your total aid package.

There are two types of financial aid: free money and self-help. Free money comes in the form of grants. So long as you pass your classes and use the grants only for educational purposes, you won't have to pay them back. Self-help comes in two forms, loans and work study. If you receive a bunch of loan offers, you don't have to take them all. You can also convert some of your loans to work study.

Loans also come in two types, subsidized and unsubsidized. Subsidized loans do not accrue interest as long as you are in school. Unsubsidized loans start accruing interest the moment you take out the loan. Naturally, you want subsidized loans rather than unsubsidized ones. And even though you may be offered \$20,000 in loans does *not* mean you should take all of it! Only take what you need. You will need to repay those loans someday, with interest. Be wise in your educational borrowing.

I have lots more information about financial aid and the FAFSA on the school website. Check it out at <http://azdl.org/financial-aid>.

If you have questions or need help with scholarships, financial aid, college applications, or anything else to do with your current and future schooling, please call or e-mail me at 480-461-3222 ext. 10644 and jnewsom@edkey.org.

Ms. Newsom

10 New Year Resolutions for Students

Why should students make New Year's Resolutions?

Everyone should always be on the lookout for ways to grow and improve as an individual. The New Year is a great time to reflect on what can be changed or done better since it is a time for fresh starts. Students are encouraged to think about what may help them be more successful with less stress.

1. Stop procrastinating. Many of our students are still recovering from the end of semester push. Our school allows students to work at their own pace without penalty. For some of our students self-pacing works and for others it leads to procrastination. Being a distance learner requires discipline which includes avoiding procrastination.
2. Commit yourself to good grades. Passing a class is one thing, doing it well and earning a grade you can be proud of is another. Students who get good grades because of dedication feel good about their success. Getting good grades now, may also open other doors in the future.
3. Don't do it all. It is very easy for students to over-commit to too many things. At some times being over-scheduled will impact your school success. While it may be fun to be in every club, play every sport or work additional hours it is important to remember what will affect you more in the future.
4. Keep a calendar. Due dates are closer than they appear. Once you start to slip in your courses it can be very difficult and sometimes overwhelming. It is easy to avoid this altogether if you keep a calendar and stick to it.
5. Practice for standardized tests. Standardized tests are different than the tests you take in our distance learning courses. This difference alone may impact your performance. To relieve anxiety practice testing in a way that makes it feel like the real thing.
6. Try something new. If school starts to get mundane or routine shake it up a little. This may involve talking with your teacher about a different way of showing what you are learning. Many of the teachers are willing to adjust assignments when the outcome is learning. Don't be afraid to ask. You may be surprised by how much you enjoy learning.
7. Know your teachers. Get to know your teachers by calling them or popping into their virtual teaching sessions. Teachers teach because they like kids. They would love to know you better.
8. Be excited to learn something new. Although your courses may have a lot content you may already know, there is always something new to learn as well. Be excited when you learn something new. Talk to your teachers about things that really interest you. You may be surprised at how much they know that isn't written into your course that they would love to share with someone who enjoys learning more.
9. Follow the directions of your teachers, advisors, and academic coaches. These people are here to help you complete your education. They want what is best for you and they are trained not to lead you astray. Do as they direct and ask questions if you do not understand.
10. Get rid of self-doubt. Doubting what you can do will only hold you back. You have a whole team of people in our school who believe in you. We believe in you, and we want you to believe in yourself.

AzMERIT

AZMerit testing is closely approaching and our school has been preparing and gathering information as it becomes available from the Arizona Department of Education (ADE)

A link has been established for all users for AZMerit: <http://azmeritportal.org> to be reviewed. Extra portals will become active as ADE continues to set up all components of the test. They are currently establishing a sample test which will be available mid February. This will be available to all users.

AZDL is preparing for AZMerit and will be assigning several site locations around the state for testing to be proctored. The locations are not yet assigned at this time. AZDL students will be doing paper-based testing, while STAR Performing Academy and our Village site will be computer-based. There will be no option to choose paper or computer based testing, each site has been designated by the state.

Student to be tested:

- Grades 3-8
 - English Language Arts
 - Mathematics
- Students enrolled in high school courses:
 - English Language Arts Grades 9-11
 - Mathematics
 - Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II

Any students who are enrolled in any of these courses with AZDL, STAR or Village will be required to take AZMerit with our school district.

We will send out testing date and other AZMerit updates in the monthly newsletter.

Galileo Benchmarks

We have now entered the 3rd round of benchmarks and are hoping for a great turn out. Once your student has signed in to Galileo, his/her math or ELA benchmark will need to be selected from the pull down arrow on the left hand side of the screen. ELA benchmarks have two exams that need to be completed (ELA and Writing). If there is more than one ELA course or math course please select the course you are currently enrolled and the correct grade level. Writing was assigned for grade 7 to 12 only. Biology was assigned to all 10th graders and should be taken unless part-time or enrolled in College courses. Please let your advisor know if this is the case. The window for benchmarks close on Friday, January 6 which gives you 2 full weeks to complete testing. The hours available to test are from 1 am-11:55 pm for open availability. Good luck and happy testing.

Report Cards and AIMS Scores

Dear Guardians/Parents,

Please check your mailboxes as we have sent out semester report cards to the addresses we have on file. Included in this letter are AIMS scores for students who took AIMS in the October session. If you have recently moved, have a new number, or a new contact email, please change the information on our website www.AZDL.org on the bottom right hand corner there is an orange link to enter your new information.

AIMS Information

AIMS:

11th and 12th graders who have not passed or taken AIMS will be required to take AIMS in February. You will be contacted by your Advisor once you have been assigned a site location. Please be aware that there may be some traveling involved to get to your testing location. We always try to be mind-full of travel time and everyone's location. The make-up AIMS testing dates are:

February 23 – Writing
 February 24 – Reading
 February 25 – Mathematics

AIMS SCIENCE:

Arizona Department of Education (ADE) will still continue to test Science for 4th, 8th, and 10th graders. If you have a student in this grade, note that your student will be assigned to a testing location. The Science AIMS dates and locations are still TBD. AZDL will determine the dates in the next newsletter.

Calendar of Events

February

16: President's Day – **NO SCHOOL**

23: **AIMS** Testing- Writing

24: **AIMS** Testing- Reading

25: **AIMS** Testing- Math

27: Staff Professional Development Day (Students may still access courses during staff training)

March

16-20: Spring Break– **NO SCHOOL**

April

3rd: April Break- **NO SCHOOL**

May

1: Staff Professional Development Day (Students may still access courses during staff training)

For a complete view of our school calendar, please visit our website at azdl.org