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July 27, 2018

MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents and Charter School Leaders

FROM: Debbie M. Rael, Deputy Secretary, School Transformation, and Dr. Icela Pelayo, Acting Deputy Secretary, Teaching and Learning *ip*

RE: K-2 Early Literacy: Istation Performance Levels, 2018-19 and Beyond

Measuring and supporting our students' early literacy skill development helps us better understand how prepared our students are for college and career. The Istation assessment, monitoring, and support system, now heading into its third year of administration, continues to be the required statewide early literacy assessment for Grades K-2. As you know, many schools have now adopted this tool for all elementary grades. After two years of Istation assessment administration statewide, New Mexico now has student achievement data that allows us to provide greater clarity for teachers, parents, and students about their early literacy.

Therefore, beginning in the 2018-19 school year, Istation will include five performance levels instead of three to help everyone better support educators and schools and better inform families about their children's early reading progress. By incorporating two (2) additional performance levels, greater specificity and individualized student support will be possible. This upgrade will be applied to the reporting for both English and Spanish assessments.

The shift to five (5) early literacy student performance levels will be supported by NMPED through the availability of statewide professional training for administrators and teachers. That said, the core operations and student assessment experience will not change. As you may know, the move to Istation two years ago dramatically decreased testing time. Istation is developing new reports, aligned to the five performance levels, which will provide more detailed information about student performance to inform targeted core instruction and intervention for students.

New Mexico applies only student achievement *growth* for educator evaluation and as the predominant indicator within school accountability. Growth utilizes student progress based on scale scores, not performance levels, therefore there are no changes to the business rules covering student achievement growth within those systems.

Student academic *proficiency* is based on student performance levels on all statewide student assessments, therefore student performance levels 4 and 5 will now be considered grade-level proficiency in K-2 as well.

Clearer and higher standards for our students' early literacy skill development, combined with ongoing support for local early literacy efforts, will only serve to bolster New Mexico's continued academic progress. More information about a student's progress and how best to intervene and address student performance is essential in supporting our students—and is a critical engagement tool with our parents and families.

This shift would not be possible without all of your collaboration, input and insight over the past two years—this is yet another place where we are responding to your feedback. We commit to continually visiting the state's schools and classrooms—where most all of the good ideas are born—to continue to improve statewide student outcomes.

If you have further questions, please contact NMPED's Istation Lead Contact, Severo Martinez at severo.martinez@state.nm.us or (505) 827-6635, or Lynn Vasquez, Director of Assessment, at lynn.vasquez@state.nm.us.

DR/IP/sb

Cc: Christopher N. Ruszkowski, Secretary of Education, PED
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