



Understanding Assessment and Accountability:

**A reference guide to
AZ LEARNS and
No Child Left Behind**

A Message from the Superintendent

Dear Members of the Scottsdale Unified School District family,

Parents, teachers and members of our community are often confused by conflicting reports of school effectiveness due to state and federal school accountability initiatives that do not provide a consistent picture of academic achievement. This pamphlet has been designed to provide you with clear, concise information regarding state assessments, state and federal accountability models, as well as an overview of Scottsdale Unified School District's academic performance.

This pamphlet provides you with the most up-to-date information about the new AIMS Dual Purpose Assessment (DPA), the new Terra Nova assessment, as well as potential modifications to both state and federal accountability systems. It is our hope that this document will answer your questions about state assessments and accountability.

Additionally, the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires districts to notify parents in their community of any change regarding Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determinations. Based on 2003-2004 AYP determinations, Scottsdale Unified School District did not make AYP. While all schools made academic targets the district failed to reach its targets in fifth (5) and eighth (8) grade reading in one of the NCLB subgroup evaluations. This determination resulted in

the District being identified for District Improvement. More detailed information regarding AYP calculations and determinations are provided below.

In keeping with NCLB requirements, Scottsdale will continue to address the needs of all learners within the district. In accordance with NCLB, we have amended our accountability plan to specifically target professional development of teachers and Administrators; providing a focus on effective instructional strategies to address learning across the district. While this requirement is prescribed by NCLB, Scottsdale has been in a state of continuous improvement for several years. The district continues to provide quality curriculum and instruction to all students; additional opportunities for students to receive differentiated instruction to meet their needs regarding AIMS requirements, and highly qualified teachers in the classroom. These efforts will be supported as the district continues to comply with NCLB.

Please join me in honoring the commitment to education that is the hallmark of our community. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the district office.

Sincerely,



John M. Baracy, Ed.D.
Superintendent

The Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS)

The Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) is designed to assess state standards in reading, mathematics and writing in grades three (3), five (5), eight (8) and ten (10). AIMS are given to students in the spring and results are reported by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) for all schools, districts and the state in late summer. AIMS data is in part used by the ADE to determine school classifications for AZ LEARNS and for No Child Left Behind (NCLB) calculations.

AIMS will be changing during the 2004-2005 school year. In the spring of 2005 students will begin testing in grades four (4), six (6) and seven (7); AIMS will be given to all students in grades 3-8 and grade 10. The ADE is still determining how these new assessment results will be used for school accountability and when they will become part of the school classifications. For more information about AIMS or school accountability, please visit the ADE Web site at www.ade.az.gov.

The table below shows the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standard (passing) on AIMS in the Scottsdale Unified School District (SUSD) compared to the state results during the 2003-2004 academic year. SUSD continues to see increased student achievement on AIMS; for the fourth year in a row, Scottsdale schools have scored far above the state average, as much as 60 percent above the state. In every subject – reading, writing and mathematics – and at every grade level tested – third, fifth, eighth and tenth – Scottsdale students perform higher than the state average. For more information about individual school results, visit www.susd.org/district/assess/testresults.cfm.

Grade/Subject	SUSD 2004 Results	Arizona 2004 Results	Difference in % points
Grade 3			
Reading	87	71	16
Mathematics	80	64	16
Writing	90	80	10
Grade 5			
Reading	78	52	26
Mathematics	75	47	25
Writing	79	62	17
Grade 8			
Reading	70	50	20
Mathematics	40	26	14
Writing	69	59	10
Grade 10			
Reading	81	59	22
Mathematics	63	39	24
Writing	82	62	20

The Stanford 9 (SAT 9)

The SAT 9 is a norm referenced test that is administered to provide a comparison of SUSD students to the state, as well as a national comparison in reading, language arts and mathematics. A score of 50 on the SAT 9 represents the national average and indicates that the student scored, as well as or better than 50 percent of the students assessed in the national norm group.

The SAT 9 is administered to students in grades two (2) through nine (9) in reading, language arts and mathematics during the spring. The SAT 9 results are reported for schools, districts and the state during late summer.

Starting in 2004-2005 the SAT 9 will no longer be administered in Arizona; instead, the ADE will administer the TerraNova. The TerraNova is a norm referenced test that is administered by CTB McGraw Hill and will replace the SAT 9 for grades two (2) and nine (9) in reading, language arts and mathematics.

In addition to these changes, the ADE will also be giving grades three (3) through eight (8) the AIMS Dual Purpose Assessment (DPA). The AIMS DPA will contain norm referenced TerraNova items. In essence, students in grades 3-8 will take a single assessment (AIMS) that will have questions counted and scored for both the AIMS as well as the TerraNova. Students in grades 3-8 will continue to receive norm referenced scores similar to the SAT 9 without the additional testing.

Since the results from the SAT 9 have been used in part for the AZ LEARNS calculations the ADE is still determining how these new assessment results will be used for school accountability and when they will become part of the school classifications. For more information about TerraNova or school accountability, please visit the ADE Web site at www.ade.az.gov.

Scottsdale schools upheld their record of strong academic success by significantly exceeding the state average score in reading, language arts and mathematics for every grade level tested on the 2004 SAT 9. On the SAT 9, which involved students in grades 2 through 9, Scottsdale students scored significantly above the state average in all three categories for all eight grade levels.

Scottsdale scores exceeded the state average by 13 to 22 percentage points.

For information on SAT 9 scores for SUSD or information about individual school results, visit www.susd.org/district/assess/testresults.cfm.

Arizona LEARNS (AZ LEARNS) Achievement Profiles

The ADE provides a school classification for all public schools (district and charter) that have been in operation for a minimum of three academic years. Schools can be classified as Underperforming, Performing, Highly Performing, Excelling or Failing. A school is classified as failing only after three consecutive Underperforming classifications. Elementary schools are evaluated based on several indicators: AIMS scores, Measure of Academic Progress (MAP which is calculated using SAT 9 scores) Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), as well as the percentage of students exceeding the standard on AIMS. High schools are evaluated based on several indicators as well: AIMS scores, graduation rate, dropout rate, AYP and the percentage of students exceeding the standard on AIMS.

The AZ LEARNS Achievement Profile formula will be evaluated for the 2004-2005 school classifications in part due to changes to state assessments (AIMS and TerraNova). The ADE will be modifying the formula to account for new assessment results as well as additional testing in the elementary grades. These modifications have not been approved by the State Board of Education or announced to schools at this time.

For the second year in a row, SUSD has more schools with the state's highest rating than any other school district in Arizona. In all, 18 of Scottsdale's 32 evaluated schools received the Excelling classification from the state. In addition, every Scottsdale school received a classification of Excelling, Highly Performing or Performing. One school, Copper Ridge Middle School, was not evaluated because it is too new. It will receive its first classification next year.

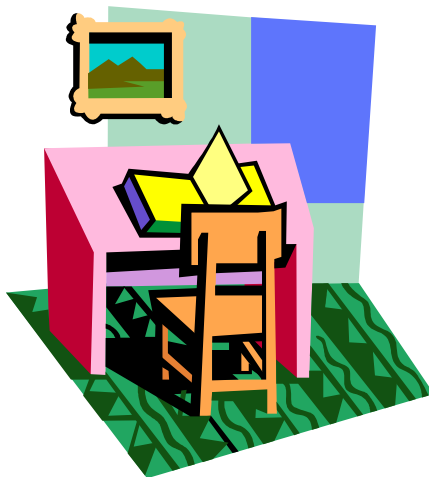


Table 2. Scottsdale Unified School District's Excelling Schools (18 schools)

School	Achievement Profile
Anasazi Elementary	Excelling
Arcadia High School	Excelling
Chaparral High School	Excelling
Cherokee Elementary School	Excelling
Cheyenne Traditional Elementary School	Excelling
Cochise Elementary School	Excelling
Cocopah Middle School	Excelling
Copper Ridge Elementary School	Excelling
Desert Canyon Elementary	Excelling
Desert Canyon Middle School	Excelling
Desert Mountain High School	Excelling
Hopi Elementary School	Excelling
Ingleside Middle School School	Excelling
Laguna Elementary School	Excelling
Mountainside Middle	Excelling
Pima Elementary School	Excelling
Saguaro High School	Excelling
Sequoia Elementary School	Excelling

Table 3. Scottsdale Unified School District's Highly Performing Schools (5)

School	Achievement Profile
Arcadia Neighborhood Learning Center	Highly Performing
Aztec Elementary School	Highly Performing
Kiva Elementary School	Highly Performing
Mohave Middle School	Highly Performing
Zuni Elementary School	Highly Performing

Table 4. Scottsdale Unified School District's Performing Schools (9)

School	Achievement Profile
Sierra Vista Academy (K-8)*	Performing
Sierra Vista Academy (High School)*	Performing
Coronado High School	Performing
Hohokam Elementary School	Performing
Navajo Elementary School	Performing
Pueblo Elementary School	Performing
Supai Middle School	Performing
Tavan Elementary School	Performing
Tonalea Elementary School	Performing
Yavapai Elementary School	Performing

*Sierra Vista Academy receives two classifications because it provides instruction to both elementary and secondary students.

No Child Left Behind, Adequate Yearly Progress

The ADE is required to provide an Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determination for all public schools (district and charter) in order to comply with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements. Schools and districts are evaluated for AYP according to the following criteria:

A school must:

1. Demonstrate progress toward meeting the goal of 100 percent proficiency in state standards, this goal must be met by 2013-2014.
2. Assess 95 percent of students.
3. Meet a 71 percent graduation rate (high schools) or a 94 percent attendance rate (elementary schools).

Schools are evaluated based on the performance of the entire school as well as subgroups within the school. NCLB requires that the following subgroups be evaluated for AYP: major ethnic groups, student's economic status, special education students and English Language Learners. In all, elementary schools are evaluated on more than 140 determinations.

If a school passes on all three measures, for all groups evaluated, then it is deemed to have made adequate yearly progress (AYP).

A district must:

1. Demonstrate progress toward meeting the goal of 100 percent proficiency in state standards district-wide; this goal must be met by 2013-2014.
2. Assess 95 percent of its students district-wide.
3. Meet a 71 percent graduation rate district-wide (for high school and unified districts) or meet a 94 percent attendance rate district-wide (for elementary districts).

Districts are also evaluated based on the performance of the entire district as well as subgroups within the district. NCLB requires that the following subgroups be evaluated for AYP: major ethnic groups, student's economic status, special education students, and English Language Learners.

If a district passes on all three measures, for all groups evaluated, then it is deemed to have made adequate yearly progress (AYP).

Every school in SUSD made AYP, with the exception of Mohave Middle School. Mohave Middle School met all academic goals and assessed all required students; however, Mohave missed the attendance rate requirement for AYP.

Scottsdale Unified School District did not make AYP during the 2003-2004 evaluation. While all schools made academic targets the

district failed to reach its academic targets in fifth (5) and eighth (8) grade reading in one of the subgroup evaluations. This discrepancy occurs because the calculations for districts and schools vary.

Since AYP is calculated based on student level data aggregated to the district, rather than a percent or proportion of schools that make or rather do not make AYP, all schools can make AYP and the district fail to make AYP. There are several factors, such as minimum number of students (N-count) used for evaluation, student mobility and Safe Harbor that result in different determinations between school and district calculations. It is the case that these factors may contribute to different AYP determinations where during the school evaluation a school may make AYP, but when data are aggregated to the district evaluations the district may not make AYP. Each of these factors will be describe in more detail.



In order for a subgroup or content area to be evaluated for the AYP calculation the subgroup must meet the minimum number or “N count” criteria of 30 students. It is possible that a subgroup or content area may have been excluded at the school level evaluation, but at the district level it was not. If a district has more than 30 students in a group, even if that group wasn’t evaluated at the school level that group’s performance affects the district AYP calculation.

Students may be included in district calculations while their scores are not included in school calculations. This can occur due to the evaluation of students who are mobile. AYP evaluates students who are considered “stable”; therefore, student mobility affects AYP calculations differently between school and district calculations. Some students may not have been included at school levels because they had not been enrolled at the school for a full academic year. Yet, students enrolled within the district for one academic year must be included.

The ADE also calculates “Safe Harbor” as required by NCLB. Some schools may make AYP because of the Safe Harbor provision of NCLB while the district does not. Safe Harbor requires an increased percentage (10 percent) of students identified as proficient; additionally the school has to meet an additional indicator. The additional indicators of Safe Harbor are attendance rate, set at 94 percent; and graduation rate, set at 71 percent. Unified districts must use graduation rate instead of attendance rate. Cumulative graduation rate at the district level may cause failure when schools individually made the Safe Harbor for the graduation rate. Attendance rate at the district level may fail where at the school level Safe Harbor was achieved.

Two additional indicators that affect district AYP calculations are school AYP appeals and the NCLB 1 percent Alternate Assessment rule. Schools are given the opportunity to appeal for statistical and/or substantive reasons. Schools within a district may have appeals granted resulting in making AYP. However, the underlying data is not changed, only the AYP determination is changed. Therefore, the original data is used to compute district AYP. Districts have an opportunity to appeal AYP determinations as well; however, district appeals are not automatically granted based on the results of school appeals.

NCLB limits the percentage of scores for students taking alternative assessments (AIMS A) that can be counted as proficient during district AYP calculations to 1 percent of the student population in the tested grades. Schools are not limited in the number or percent of students who can be considered proficient on the AIMS-A assessment. Therefore, students who scored proficient beyond the 1 percent cap allowed by NCLB were counted as “not proficient” for the purposes of AYP calculations only. It is important to note that individual student scores are not impacted by this rule. However, these students’ scores may impact a district’s ability to make AYP.

Making sense of school accountability

Professional educators often caution parents from using single pieces of information to make decisions about school effectiveness. Rather, they encourage parents and the community to use the wealth of information and data about school or district performance to make good decisions about their children’s futures.

There is real risk in using single measures to evaluate schools or districts. The state and federal governments acknowledge this and require that school accountability be based on multiple indicators in order to insure accurate and fair evaluations of schools. In addition to state and federal requirements for testing and accountability, schools also strive to provide evidence of success through other measures. For example, Scottsdale has ongoing district assessments throughout the school year that are designed to measure strengths and weakness of each student. In the year ahead the district will begin to revise this system in order to provide more reliable information to students, parents and teachers about student academic achievement.

It is our hope that this information will prove to be valuable in assisting you to determine the effectiveness of the schools in the Scottsdale Unified School District. For updated information about the district, please visit www.susd.org.

If you have any questions regarding the material contained in this document, please contact the following departments:

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This brochure is also available on the district Web site at:

www.susd.org/district/assess/index.cfm