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SCOTTSDALE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT Phoenix, AZ 85018-5420
Arizona's Most Excelling School District

SCOTTSDALE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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ARIZONA'S MOST EXCELLING SCHOOL DISTRICT

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.

In keeping with NCLB requirements, Scottsdale will continue to address the needs of all learners within the District. In accordance with NCLB, we 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.

Last year, 33 of the District's 33 schools made AYP as well as the District-this was an outstanding accomplishment. This year, we are proud to announce that 32 of our 33 schools made AYP- another outstanding accomplishment. NCLB requires districts to notify parents in their community of any change regarding AYP determinations. Based on 2005-06 AYP determinations, Scottsdale Unified School District did not make AYP and has been identified for District Improvement. In this evaluation the district failed to reach its targets in seventh (7) and eighth (8) grade reading in one of the NCLB subgroups. More detailed information regarding AYP calculations and determinations are provided below.

You, as a parent, are a very important part of the educational process. In addition to the assistance and nurturing that you provide, you can participate in the continuous improvement efforts within the District. Your efforts can help our schools and the District make AYP in the future. You may want to become involved by:

- Reviewing your child's homework, tests and Galileo benchmark results;
- Supporting and reinforcing your child's good study habits;
- Become a member of your school's site council;
- Attending Board meetings and giving input at appropriate times;
- Serving on a school or District committee; and
- Coming to parent-school meetings on student achievement.

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 Dual Purpose Assessment (AIMS-DPA) is designed to assess state standards in reading, mathematics and writing in grades three (3) through eight (8) as well as measure National Standards that are assessed using norm-referenced assessment items like those used on the TerraNova. The AIMS-DPA combines both types of assessments into one test for students in elementary and middle school. AIMS-DPA 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 the summer. AIMS-DPA data and used in part by the ADE to determine school classifications for AZ LEARNS and for No Child Left Behind (NCLB) calculations.

The AIMS test is also given to students in high school starting in grade 10. The AIMS test was made a graduation requirement in 2006; therefore, students must pass all three parts of the AIMS test to graduate. Students are given five opportunities to pass the AIMS test. The Arizona Board of Regents also offers AIMS Tuition Waivers for students excelling on the AIMS test. Students are able to retake the AIMS to obtain an Excelling designation in order to qualify for this award. For more information about AIMS, the AIMS tuition waiver 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 2005-2006 academic year. SUSD continues to see increased student achievement on AIMS; for the sixth year in a row, Scottsdale schools have scored far above the state average. In every subject – reading, writing and mathematics – and at every grade level tested Scottsdale students perform higher than the state average. For more information about individual school results, visit www.susd.org/district/assess/testresults.cfm.

Table 1. Percentage of Students meeting/exceeding (passing) the standard on AIMS 2006

	2006			Difference		
	Rdg	Writ	Math	Rdg	Writ	Math
Grade 3	86	65	88	11	8	9
District Averages	75	57	79			
State						
Grade 4	86	82	88	13	10	9
District Averages	73	72	79			
State						
Grade 5	89	79	88	15	17	14
District Averages	74	62	74			
State						
Grade 6	85	96	84	14	5	16
District Averages	71	91	68			
State						
Grade 7	85	95	87	13	3	14
District Averages	72	92	73			
State						
Grade 8	82	91	78	13	8	13
District Averages	69	83	65			
State						
Grade 10	90	80	84	13	12	15
District Averages	77	68	69			
State						

The TerraNova

The TerraNova 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 TerraNova 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 TerraNova is administered to students in grades two (2) and nine (9) in reading, language arts and mathematics during the spring. Students in grades three (3) through eight (8) also receive TerraNova results based on the items that are given on the AIMS-DPA. The TerraNova results are reported for schools, districts and the state during late summer.

In 2006 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 2006 TerraNova. Scottsdale scores exceeded the state average by as much as 20 percentage points. For information on TerraNova 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, Performing Plus, Highly Performing, Excelling or Failing. Schools that are designated as Performing Plus are given credit for moving students to proficiency on the state standards, which earns them enough points to be Highly Performing or Excelling; however, in order to receive these labels schools also have to have a significant percentage of students exceeding the standard on AIMS. 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 AIMS 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 continues to undergo revisions annually. These modifications are often a result of Federal changes to NCLB as well as State statutes and State Board of Education rules. All modifications must be approved by the State Board of Education prior to implementation.

SUSD is proud to have 21 schools receive the state's highest rating in 2006. In all, 21 of Scottsdale's 33 evaluated schools received the Excelling classification from the state. In addition, every Scottsdale school received a classification of Excelling, Highly Performing, Performing Plus or Performing.

Table 2. Scottsdale Unified School District's Excelling Schools (21)

<i>Anasazi Elementary</i>	<i>Desert Canyon Elementary</i>
<i>Arcadia High School</i>	<i>Desert Mountain High School</i>
<i>Aztec Elementary School</i>	<i>Hopi Elementary School</i>
<i>Chaparral High School</i>	<i>Ingleside Middle School</i>
<i>Cherokee Elementary School</i>	<i>Kiva Elementary School</i>
<i>Cheyenne Traditional Elementary School</i>	<i>Laguna Elementary School</i>
<i>Cochise Elementary School</i>	<i>Mountainside Middle School</i>
<i>Cocopah Middle School</i>	<i>Pima Elementary School</i>
<i>Copper Ridge Elementary School</i>	<i>Saguaro High School</i>
<i>Copper Ridge Middle School</i>	<i>Sequoia Elementary School</i>
	<i>Zuni Elementary School</i>

Table 3. Scottsdale Unified School District's Highly Performing Schools (4):

<i>Arcadia Neighborhood Learning Center</i>	<i>Mohave Middle School</i>
<i>Desert Canyon Middle School</i>	<i>Tavan Elementary School</i>

Table 4. Scottsdale Unified School District's Performing Plus Schools (6):

<i>Coronado High School</i>	<i>Pueblo Elementary School</i>
<i>Hohokam Elementary School</i>	<i>Tonalea Elementary School</i>
<i>Navajo Elementary School</i>	<i>Yavapai Elementary School</i>

Table 5. Scottsdale Unified School District's Performing Schools (2):

<i>Sierra Vista Academy</i>	<i>Supai Middle School</i>
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**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 70.5 percent graduation rate (high schools) or a 90 percent attendance rate (elementary schools).

Schools are evaluated based on the performance of the entire school as well as subgroups within the school by grade level & content area. NCLB requires that the following subgroups be evaluated for AYP: major ethnic groups, students' economic status, special education students and English Language Learners. If a school passes on all three measures, for all groups evaluated, then it is deemed to have made adequate yearly progress (AYP). Failure to meet any one indicator will result in the school failing to make 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 70.5 percent graduation rate district-wide (for high school and unified districts) or meet a 90 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, students' 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). Again, failure on any one indicator will result in the District failing to make AYP.

Based on the 2006 AYP determinations every school in the District made AYP, with the exception of Supai Middle School. Supai Middle School failed to meet the academic goals for seventh (7) and eighth (8) grade reading for two NCLB subgroups; they assessed all required students; and made the attendance rate requirement for AYP.

Scottsdale Unified School District did not make AYP during the 2005-2006 evaluation. The District failed to reach its academic targets in seventh (7) and eighth (8) grade reading in one of the subgroup evaluations; the District assessed all required students and met the attendance rate and graduation rate requirements for AYP.

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 40 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 40 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 90 percent; and graduation rate, set at 70.5 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. In addition to limiting the use of alternative assessments, NCLB also penalizes schools and districts for the use of alternate accommodations on the AIMS tests. These accommodations change the comparability of test scores for special education students; therefore, NCLB requires that these students’ tests cannot be counted in the evaluation of 95% tested or in the academic proficiency determinations. 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. The District intends to use Galileo benchmark results to determine students’ readiness for AIMS. These test results will assist teachers and parents to identify students’ needs so that remediation can occur before the AIMS test is administered in the Spring.

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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(AIMS DPA, TerraNova, Accountability)

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

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

For a copy of the District Report Card for the Scottsdale Unified School District, please visit:

http://www.ade.az.gov/srcs/find_school.asp?rdoYear=2007



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