

Executive Summary
Arizona State System of School Support
School Effectiveness Division

“I will work hard to make sure that Arizona students learn substantially more than they have been learning.” This is a promise made by Superintendent of Public Schools, Tom Horne, to Arizona students and parents. He has also stated that, “We are committed to improvement through better teachers, better curriculum and better schools.” To fulfill these promises, the School Effectiveness Division of the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) adheres to certain principles: quality is paramount, teamwork is fundamental, improvement is essential, partnership is necessary, and decisions are student centered.

Therefore, it is our mission to support all schools in increasing performance through leadership, information, training, and technical assistance. These elements of support are provided within a cohesive framework for excellence in public education.

Arizona Revised Statute § 15-241 (AZ LEARNS) requires ADE to compile an annual achievement profile for each public school. Data necessary to compile the achievement profile is submitted to ADE from the schools. The achievement profile is used to determine a school classification that designates each school as an Excelling school, a Highly Performing school, a Performing school, an Underperforming school or a school Failing to Meet Academic Standards. Recently the State has added Performing Plus as an additional achievement profile classification.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 required states to develop challenging academic standards and to administer yearly assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics. Arizona’s Academic Standards are grade level articulated and have been developed with the involvement of educators throughout the state. The Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) test is the assessment administered statewide to students in grades 3 – 8 and 10th. The AIMS Dual Purpose Assessment (DPA) contains AIMS and Terra Nova items on one assessment. The DPA reduces the number of questions students must answer; and provides data that assist in the compilation of a school’s achievement profile and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determination.

Schools may appeal achievement profile determinations. Appeals must address the issues related to a school’s achievement profile and may take the form of a statistical appeal or a substantive appeal. Statistical appeals relate to errors in data and substantive appeals describe one-time factors outside the school’s control that adversely affect performance.

The ADE formed the School Effectiveness Division in August of 2003 to address the areas of school improvement and intervention. The division was restructured in 2007 with the aim of providing valuable and defined support to Arizona schools and LEAs. Today the division is composed of School Improvement and Intervention, K-12 Literacy (including AZ READS, Reading First, Adolescent Literacy and the 21st Century Learning

Centers program), Educational Technology, Early Childhood Education, and Special Populations (migrant, homeless, and refugees) sections.

The ADE provides three levels of support and technical assistance within Arizona's state system of school and district support. The levels of support are Prevention, Improvement Assistance, and Improvement Intervention.

Prevention Level

Schools at the Prevention Level have been designated by the State Accountability System, AZ LEARNS, as a school at the performing, performing plus, highly performing, or excelling levels. Additionally, under the federal accountability system (i.e., NCLB) these schools have met AYP for two or more consecutive years or they have not met AYP for the first time and are in the warning year.

Improvement Assistance Level

Schools at the Improvement Assistance Level have been designated by the state accountability system, AZ LEARNS, as underperforming for one year or for two consecutive years. Additionally, under the federal accountability system these schools have not met AYP for two or three consecutive years. These schools are in year one or year two of school improvement under NCLB guidelines.

The ADE provides assistance to schools and districts who receive consequences as a result of state or federal accountability systems:

1. The ADE will provide services to the school and districts in the initial stages of improvement to develop or revise improvement plans and to build capacity of schools and districts to implement the school improvement process so that student achievement improves.
2. The ADE will monitor schools and districts in the middle stages of improvement for consistent implementation of their improvement plan.

In an effort to provide assistance and support during the initial stages of school improvement under AZ LEARNS, the state legislature mandated in statute the development and deployment of Solutions Teams. Members of the Solutions Teams are experts in the education field (e.g., master teachers, fiscal analysts, school administrators, professors of education). The ADE recruited, screened, selected and trained approximately 300 Solutions Team members in the 2003-2004 school year. To date, approximately 450 Arizona educators have been trained as Solutions Team Members. The team members are given specific training for conducting on-site visits and produce a statement of findings and recommendations that will validate or redirect a school's improvement efforts. After the school's Arizona School Improvement Plan is submitted to the ADE, a Solutions Team is deployed to the school.

The development of the Solutions Team concept and the recruitment of members from the field was a grassroots effort. A stakeholders group of over 50 educators were asked to provide input into the development of the process. Information meetings were held across the state and educators were asked to face the brutal facts. Phyllis Schwartz,

Associate Superintendent for School Effectiveness, explained that Arizona had a crisis and that the services and expertise of Arizona educators were needed. She assured them that the capacity existed within Arizona to make a difference for students. The mantra was, "If not you, then who? If not now, then when?" Dozens of dedicated educators have stepped up to visit schools and make recommendations for improving students' performance. A bonus to having educators from the field serve as Solutions Team Members is that they have taken this experience back to their schools and districts and used this model as a source for gathering data about their own schools. The Standards and Rubrics for School Improvement is being used in their schools for continuous improvement. In Mesa School District, a cadre of 25 administrators and teachers have been trained in a peer assisted leadership model aligned with the Solution Team process. Their plan is to develop a similar school visit process that will lead to continuous improvement using their own staff, which includes the district's superintendent and staff.

The first year (2003-04), Solution Teams visited 81 schools that were in their second year of underperforming under the state's accountability system, AZ LEARNS. The response from the field was impressive. School officials not only welcomed the Solutions Teams, but also voiced their respect for those who had been recruited and sent to make the visits. Evidence of the powerful impact made by the Solutions Teams and the follow up assignment of the Arizona School Site Improvement Support Team (ASSIST) Coach can be found in the number of these schools that did not move to the third year of underperforming. Only 11 of these 81 schools were identified as failing to meet academic standards at the close of the school year. This is a statement about the commitment of these school officials, their staffs and state support. One year later, nine of the eleven underperforming schools were no longer in failing status.

After the school site has received the Solutions Teams Statement of Findings (recommendations and priorities), an ASSIST Coach is assigned as a resource person to offer support for school improvement efforts. ASSIST Coaches make monthly follow-up site visits to guide the school's improvement/leadership team in the coordination of viable and effective internal and external educational resources. Since September 2005 ASSIST Coaches have recorded over 2,000 phone calls, 1,500 site visits, and 4,500 emails. ASSIST Coaches aid in the coordination of all educational resources, specifically those available through the ADE. The ASSIST Coaches document the progress of the school's level of implementation of the Arizona School Improvement Plan (ASIP) and recommendations contained in the Solutions Teams Statement of Findings. The objective is to assist schools in developing capacity for sustained school improvement.

Improvement Intervention Level

Schools at the School Improvement Intervention Level are schools that have been designated by AZ LEARNS as a school that has been underperforming for three consecutive years. These schools have failed to meet the state's academic standards. These schools, as with schools at all levels, may submit an appeal for reconsideration of their school profile designation. A successful appeal will change the school designation to the performing level. Under the federal accountability system these schools have not

met AYP for three or more consecutive years and are identified as year 3 Corrective Action, year 4 Restructuring Planning, or year 5 Restructuring Implementation.

If a school reaches the intervention stage, the ADE staff becomes more closely involved in the school improvement process:

1. For schools failing to meet academic standards, under AZ LEARNS, the ADE will direct the intervention planning followed by monitoring of the implementation of the intervention plan.
2. For Corrective Action schools, the ADE will oversee the selection and implementation of the corrective action.
3. If a Corrective Action school moves to Restructuring Planning, the ADE will oversee the development of the Restructuring Plan, followed by monitoring of the implementation of the Restructuring Plan.

The State System of School Support for all schools and (LEA's district) provides:

1. Professional development aligned to the needs of schools that supports teachers' curriculum delivery and assessment, develops school and district leaders, and enhances the integration of technology; and
2. Focused support to Title I schools that have not met AYP for the first time.

Professional development opportunities and Best Practice Academies are offered based on trends in Solution Team findings, needs among underperforming schools, state AIMS scores, and requests from the field. Academies may be adapted for unique regional needs.

A catalog of professional development and technical assistance is available on the ADE's website at www.ade.az.gov.

Useful publication available to Arizona's schools and districts are the

- *Standards and Rubrics for School Improvement*
- *Resource Guide for the Standards and Rubrics for School Improvement*
- *Standards and Rubrics for LEA Improvement*
- *LEA Improvement State System of Support guidance document for improvement through corrective action and restructuring*

Educators in the state may also access the Calendar of Events located on the ADE website. The Calendar of Events provides information regarding upcoming professional development opportunities.

IDEAL ([Integrated Data to Enhance Arizona's Learning](#)) is a web portal for all Arizona educators. IDEAL represents the commitment and dedication of the ADE to offer online resources that support high quality teaching and that provide an engaging, technology-rich learning environment for all Arizona students.

Teachers and administrators have access to over 3,500 formative assessment items and pre-made quizzes, school improvement resources, standards-based streaming video

library and a resource library of trade books aligned to Arizona Standards. Lesson plans and reading passages were developed or identified to provide teachers with materials that are aligned to the grade level standards in social studies and science. The site offers educators curriculum-based application software tutorials including a rubric maker, citation maker, and graphic organizer maker

In January 2008, a new version of IDEAL was made available that included a new registration system which makes obtaining access to IDEAL much easier. IDEAL 2.0 has improved site navigation and a unified search engine for educational content aligned to grade levels, subject areas, and Arizona State Standards. IDEAL v2.0 also has a full service registration system available to districts to utilize for online and onsite professional development and to create completion certificates. District administrators will be able to set up classes, register participants, and track teacher progress. In addition, IDEAL 2.0 has access to Google applications and iTunesU, a space devoted exclusively to education, where it is easy and safe to search for thousands of approved audio and video educational resources.

The Statewide Instructional Technology (SIT) Project is the statewide support for IDEAL implementation. Based out of their counties, Technology Integration Specialist(s) are available to help districts and schools to better utilize IDEAL Resources. Contact information for the SIT Project can be found at <http://www.ade.az.gov/technology/sit/SITContacts.pdf> .

Improvement Intervention

The School Improvement and Intervention section in collaboration with the Research and Evaluation section provide an Appeals Workshop designed to assist school officials with writing an appeal to their achievement profile designation. If the school's appeal is successful the achievement profile is changed to performing and there is no intervention from the state.

Should a school be designated as Failing To Meet Academic Standards, a team consisting of state employees plan and schedule a state intervention site visit to that school. The site visit consists of activities designed to collect information regarding the implementation of the school improvement plan, the alignment of the curriculum with state standards, the prioritization of the school budget to support school improvement, the professional development provided for the staff, and what research-based strategies are implemented to improve student achievement. These five outcomes are listed in A.R.S. § 15-241 (U).

The data gathered during the state intervention site visit are culled with data from the Solutions Teams findings and recommendations, the ASSIST Coach data, and the principal's report. The resulting data report is presented to a Team Intervention Planning (TIP) committee.

The TIP committee membership consists of educators from across the state and may include superintendents, assistant superintendents, principals, teachers, charter school

personnel, curriculum specialist, North Central Accreditation personnel, university faculty, and state department personnel. This committee is presented with the document of combined data from which they identify needs in the five outcome areas that are outlined in state statute.

The TIP committee may recommend any one or a combination of the following intervention options: 1) continued implementation of the ASIP with the support of an intervention program specialist, 2) Assigning a Mentor Principal, 3) assigning a Turnaround Principal, 4) assigning Accomplished Teacher Leader for Academic Success (ATLAS Teachers), 5) restructuring the school through an outside agency. Every attempt is made to recommend interventions that are prescriptive. Therefore, additional interventions may be recommended that are designed to address specific needs of a school.

A Mentor Principal's role is to mentor the current principal of a school. The Mentor Principal's mission is to help the principal gain the knowledge and skills necessary to transform the school from a Failing to Meet Academic Standards school to a Performing school; and to help develop an infrastructure in order to ensure sustainability at a Performing level.

A Turnaround Principal may be placed in a school if the TIP committee resolves that the school principal does not possess the skill set nor the capacity to address the identified needs and take the necessary actions to improve student performance. The Turnaround Principal replaces the current principal and becomes the educational leader for the school. The Turnaround Principal's mission is to transform the school from a Failing to Meet Academic Standards school to a Performing school and to develop an infrastructure in order to ensure sustainability at a Performing level.

ATLAS Teachers may be placed at a School Failing to Meet Academic Standards. They will teach students, coach teachers and/or mentor teachers as prescribed by the intervention for the school. Their mission is to help transform the school from a Failing to Meet Academic Standards school to a Performing school. Their responsibilities include coaching teachers to ensure lessons and classroom activities provide a variety of instruction strategies and grouping practices that engage student and allow multiple pathways for student to master the state academic standards.

An Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) is developed between the District and the ADE. This agreement outlines the responsibilities of the District and the responsibilities of the ADE. The IGA for each school is submitted to the Arizona State Board of Education for their approval. The terms of the agreement are enforced for a minimum of two years and maximum of five years. When a school reaches Performing status and the minimum two years of the IGA have expired, that school is no longer accountable to the State Intervention Unit.

The progress of these schools is monitored through a series of reports that are submitted to the program specialist that is assigned to support the school. The program specialist

makes frequent visits to the school and maintains open lines of communication through email and telephone. From October 2006 - May 2007 the number of contacts were constituted of 2658 emails, 412 phone calls, and, 291 school visits.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Support

In the fall of every year, the ADE provides the Title I School and District Fall Process Workshops. These workshops are designed to provide technical assistance to schools and districts in all levels of school improvement under NCLB. These workshops are provided in three major sites of the state by ADE staff members. School officials are provided information regarding federal requirements to notify parents and their communities about AYP status, writing a school improvement plan, applying for school improvement grant funds, and defining the options for schools that are in corrective action or restructuring.

School officials have been invited to attend conferences presented by nationally recognized researchers in the field of education. To date, eight of these conferences have been offered to educators in Arizona.

The ADE assigns NCLB program specialists to assist the administrators and staffs of schools in the preparation of their school improvement plans, the selection of a corrective action and its implementation, and the writing and implementation of a Restructuring Plan.

As LEAs move into the arena of improvement, the ADE works collaboratively with them to develop an LEA Improvement Plan based on the option that most closely addresses the reasons they have not made AYP. The ADE also provides technical assistance by helping schools and the LEA to know and understand the NCLB requirements for LEAs in improvement.

Arizona is raising the bar for all schools. It is expected that schools will employ a continuous improvement process that is designed to positively impact student achievement. This expectation is advanced by the ADE - a state agency that provides a comprehensive and collaborative statewide system of support.

Further information on all areas of support may be found on the ADE website at www.azed.gov. A recent study on Arizona's system of Support has been completed by the American Institute of Research (AIR) and was funded by the Southwest Comprehensive Center of WestEd. It can be found on the ADE website.

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