

The Condition of School Accountability in Arizona: 2005

Executive Summary

The most noticeable trend in the 2004 version of the state accountability system, Arizona LEARNS, is the large percentage (71 percent) of schools designated as “Performing.” Also, 13 Arizona public schools have been designated as “Failing” and face further state intervention. According to summary statistics, “Failing” schools have the lowest average percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standards and school performance increases with each higher achievement profile. However, for individual schools classified within the same achievement profile, school performance varies widely. The inconsistent relationship between 2004 AIMS results and achievement profiles raises important policy implications about the utility of the achievement profiles as a tool to aid parents in school choice decisions. Clear and accurate school performance information is particularly important in Arizona, where parents have more educational freedom to choose their child’s school than in any other state.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- The Arizona State Legislature authorize and fund an independent evaluation team composed of personnel who are not responsible for directing and managing the accountability program to review the accountability system.
- The State Board of Education and the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) maintain consistency in the school accountability system as the state transitions into the new “Dual Purpose Assessment.”
- The State Board and ADE establish a consistent definition of the achievement profiles and Adequate Yearly Progress designations, and educate parents and the public on the meaning of these school labels.