



City High School & Tucson Small School Project

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Principal's Response to City High School Not Meeting “Annual Yearly Progress” (AYP)

We are disappointed that City High School did not meet AYP - "annual yearly progress" - for 2005-2006 and would like to provide some context so that parents and others in the community better understand how the statistical determinations are made and what it means for our school.

AYP determinations are made based on two factors related to the AIMS tests taken by students the previous spring: 1) the test scores themselves and 2) the percentage of students who took the tests. City High School did not make AYP because of the second factor. Our students' test scores from last spring were quite strong and the scores were higher than the previous year's results; however, according to the state's statistics, the number of City High students taking the test fell just shy of the required 95%.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires that schools administer the test to at least 95% of the students eligible to take it. Although we were confident at testing time last spring that over 95% of the students who needed to take the reading, writing, and math portions of the AIMS test, the Arizona Department of Education calculated the City High School test completion rate at 93%. This discrepancy is due, in part, to the new federal guidelines that have been discussed in numerous articles in local papers in the past week. See, for example, the Arizona Daily Star's compelling editorial from Thursday, August 31. <http://www.azstarnet.com/allheadlines/144425>

The federal government recently decided that when special education students receive accommodations while taking annual state-mandated tests (e.g. AIMS in Arizona), their scores will not be counted in the overall completion rate for the school. Although the accommodations, such as the use of a calculator or having a student dictate the answer to a teacher for transcription, are allowable as part of a child's individual education plan, the federal government no longer approves the use of them. Schools throughout Arizona, including City High School, continued to provide these types of accommodations for our special education students during the testing period last spring. What came as a surprise to most schools is that not only were these special education students' test scores not included in the overall school scores, but, more importantly, the students themselves were not counted in the overall test completion rate for the school. This change in federal policy, which the

Arizona Department of Education is required to abide by, has resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of Arizona schools not making AYP. See today's headline article in the Arizona Daily Star to better understand the impact on Tucson-area schools:

<http://www.azstarnet.com/allheadlines/144707>

At City High School we will continue to stay focused on helping all students strengthen their skills in the foundational skills of reading, writing, and mathematics, while at the same time challenging students to explore all areas of knowledge, including history and politics, science, culture, the Spanish language, the arts ... and the list goes on. City High students have performed well on standardized tests the past two years, and we are confident that our educational program will continue to promote our students' academic progress – as measured by external tests such as AIMS as well as by internal performance-based assessments that teachers require in their curriculum.

Lastly, I want to emphasize that we look to our parents as key partners in supporting each child's academic growth, especially when it comes to encouraging active participation in classes throughout the school year. Daily participation in school is a critically important component of a student's success. At City High School – and in Phoenix and in Washington, DC – a high premium is placed on good attendance, not only on test days, but on all days.

To better understand how the Arizona Department of Education calculates each school's AYP status and "AZ Learns" label (performing vs. underperforming), I encourage you to visit the ADE website, www.ade.az.gov. The document link below provides a helpful overview: <http://www.ade.az.gov/azlearns/PuttingPieces/20.doc>.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the City High School educational program, the AIMS test, No Child Left Behind legislation, or any other related issue.

Sincerely,

Carrie Brennan, Principal