

The Student Accountability Information System

Former Superintendent of Public Instruction Lisa Graham Keegan's plan for raising the quality and outcome of educational instruction in Arizona revolved around two central themes: achievement and accountability. Increasing student achievement levels is critically important given how our state compares nationally and how our nation compares internationally. Arizona has risen to this challenge by implementing nationally recognized academic standards and, beginning in the Spring of 1999, an annual assessment of those standards through the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS).

Accountability in our public education system is equally important. Currently, over \$4.2 billion is spent annually on K-12 education in Arizona and 48% is directly appropriated from the state general fund. The Department of Education (ADE) is committed to bringing greater accountability and efficiency to school funding in Arizona. To achieve this, ADE has developed the Student Accountability Information System (SAIS), a program for fundamentally advancing Arizona's school finance system. The major objectives of SAIS are to:

1. Replace the existing (non-Year 2000 ready) internal School Finance System with new (fully Year 2000 ready) systems that will improve school finance processes and services to Local Education Agencies (LEA's).
2. Build a Student Database System to reduce the reporting burden from LEA's and improve the accuracy and timeliness of student counts required for state and federal funding and reporting.

SAIS will allow LEA's to electronically submit raw student and school data based on real-time events rather than summary reports on paper or diskette. Because SAIS will collect data at the student and school level, the system will capture, process and report information on a real-time basis, thus enabling real-time funding. As a result, SAIS will operationalize school finance reform, leading to true equity and true local control through financial and academic accountability at the level closest to the student.

SAIS simplifies and automates burdensome and time-consuming administrative tasks through the electronic data exchange and on-line processing of data via the Internet. SAIS combines secure statewide connectivity through the Internet with a central data warehouse of accurate and timely student, school and financial information. In addition, SAIS will use the school report cards to post academic achievement data for district and school use.

SAIS will utilize standardized data formats to accept information and employ legislatively mandated business rules for data processing and reporting to

allocate funding to schools. All LEA's will be required to have a dedicated 56KB internet connection to the District or Central Office. In addition, all LEA's will be required to **extract** various student data elements from their data systems, creating text files which are sent to ADE across the Internet. Raw data such as student records and teacher certification information will **not** be made available to the public.

SAIS will dramatically improve both the exchange of school finance data between LEA's and ADE and overall accountability in the K-12 system. SAIS will, for the first time, provide essential information to educators, legislators, and parents about the budgets, expenditures, and achievement levels of schools. In addition, this information will help our elected officials make better decisions about funding for schools and assist parents in making the right choices about their child's education.