

Arizona's School Accountability System 2011 *Appeals Process for AZ LEARNS*



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Appeals Processes for 2011 AZ LEARNS

The AZ LEARNS appeals processes and timelines have changed from previous years. This document describes the procedures and timelines AZ LEARNS. The first section addresses the changes in timeline; the second section covers changes to the AZ LEARNS appeals process.

Major Changes from Previous Years

1. **AZ LEARNS A-F and AZ LEARNS achievement profiles will be released separately.** The 2011 timelines are below:

Embargoed release of preliminary AZ LEARNS A-F	August 1, 2011
Opening of appeals window for AZ LEARNS A-F (data corrections only)	August 1, 2011
Closing of appeals window for AZ LEARNS A-F	August 24, 2011

Embargoed release of preliminary AZ LEARNS Legacy	August 19, 2011
Opening of appeals window for AZ LEARNS Legacy (substantive appeals only)	August 19, 2011
Closing of appeals window for AZ LEARNS Legacy	August 24, 2011

AZ LEARNS Statistical Appeals: Data corrections in SAIS must be completed by 4pm on August 24 for both A-F and Legacy AZ LEARNS. You will be unable to open a 15 - 915 after this window is closed to make data corrections that we can include for AZ LEARNS public releases. For a statistical appeal all that needs to be done is data corrections in SAIS. For the legacy AZ LEARNS release, a substantive appeal can be filed. Both systems use the same data and hence all data should be corrected in SAIS before August 24 at 4pm.

AZ LEARNS Achievement Profile Appeals Process

PROCEDURE

The Arizona Department of Education will be releasing two different State Accountability measures this year – the traditional AZ LEARNS profiles (AZ LEARNS Legacy) and the newly instituted AZ LEARNS A-F rating of schools and LEAs. In accordance with A.R.S. §15-241, school principals/administrators will be allowed the opportunity to appeal the AZ LEARNS Legacy and A-F profiles on behalf of the school(s) and/or LEA for which they are responsible.

1. **AZ LEARNS statistical appeals:** Statistical appeals *cannot* be submitted via the online application. Data that was corrected no longer needs to be submitted to Research and Evaluation via the appeals application. If the underlying data has been corrected by the deadlines, AZ LEARNS re-calculation will use that corrected data.

Step 1: Data Correction

The first step in completing the data correction process requires *all* districts and schools to review *all* data in order to confirm its accuracy. The data correction window is open from August 1, 2011 through August 24, 2011. SAIS ID corrections must be done utilizing the SAIS ID correction application located on the AZ LEARNS/Adequate Yearly Progress (NCLB) page of the Common Logon. In the application, schools/LEAs can verify and correct SAIS ID numbers. All other data (enrollment, grade, name, DOB) should be corrected in the SAIS system. The data in SAIS will overwrite the data in the AIMS tables. For the Graduation Rate data correction, a 915 request must be submitted to School Finance and data should be corrected in SAIS.

It is important to note that LEAs and schools are solely responsible for verifying their own data. If an LEA did not verify the information for itself and its schools through the data correction process, the ADE assumed the schools on file and the data available were correct as listed.

Step 2: Appeal Application (substantive appeals - only for Legacy AZ LEARNS)

School principals/administrators that choose to appeal an Achievement Profile must complete the Appeal Application, which is accessible via the Common Logon AZ LEARNS/Adequate Yearly Progress application during the appeal window (August 19, 2011 - August 24, 2011) in order to indicate the exact issue(s) of appeal. Appeals are *only* accepted through the website application. Once the appeal is submitted, an email will be sent to the address provided in the appeal application as notification that the appeal was received. Appeals sent to ADE via email, fax, or mail/delivery will *not* be accepted.

Substantive Appeals

Schools that appeal based on substantive arguments can argue that mitigating circumstances, outside of the school's control, negatively impacted the quantity or quality of test data in any of the years in which data were collected. This includes circumstances that affected test conditions, test scores, and performance levels.

Important Notes for the Appeal Process

School principals/administrators that choose to appeal an Achievement Profile must clearly articulate all the issue(s) they believe merit an appeal through the appeal application.

School principals/administrators must submit evidence that the issue(s) they believe merit an appeal directly resulted in a *significant* decrease in student academic achievement as demonstrated on AIMS or an impact on other indicators used in the formula.

The evidence must be submitted to ADE at the time the appeal is submitted. If the school chooses to provide additional evidence, it should be mentioned in the appeal document itself with a brief description of what additional evidence was submitted. Additional evidence should be submitted via email to Achieve@azed.gov. Failure to provide this evidence will result in the appeal not being granted. Evidence that is submitted after the appeal deadline closes will not be considered. Once appeals are submitted through the Common Logon, the school/district/charter holder will receive an email verifying that the appeal has been received.

The ADE, if necessary, will request that a school principal/administrator provide additional information/evidence to assist in the appeals process. Only those requests for additional information that are provided during the specific timeframe will be included in the appeals process. Requests submitted after the specified timeframe will be excluded from the appeals process. Unsolicited additional information submitted after the appeal deadline will not be accepted.

Step 3: Appeal Resolution

After all appeals are submitted and the appeal window closes, the ADE will begin to process the appeals. Appeals are addressed categorically, not necessarily in the order received so the fact that a school submits its appeal during the first day of the appeal window does not mean it will necessarily receive a decision first during the resolution process. The appeal process is implemented in two stages.

Stage 1- Substantive Appeals Processed

Substantive appeals are resolved in a committee process. All committee members represent a diverse background to ensure that appeals are considered from multiple perspectives.

Once the committee is assembled, the appeals are evaluated utilizing an appeals rubric approved by the State Board of Education that evaluates the argument presented and whether or not the evidence provided to support the argument is compelling. The appeals rubric consists of a three-tiered system for appeal evaluation:

- 1) Initial review of the appeal to determine its merit.
- 2) Review of the evidence provided.
- 3) Committee recommendation.

Initial Review

The substantive appeal rubric provides for three categories that would apply during the initial review. Each appeal is classified into the categories based on the information provided in the appeals.

1. ***Data Discrepancies.*** Appeals of this nature reference when schools attempt to compare data details provided in the common logon with their data sets and get different numbers. If in the appeal, the school/district provides information of data discrepancies and those data discrepancies are actual and not a result of the school or district's inability to replicate the Achievement Profiles formula, the appeal will be deemed as passing the initial review. At this stage, it was important for the school or district to be specific in their claim of differences so that the ADE can adequately determine if the data sets are in fact different.
2. ***Special Circumstances outside the school's/district's control.*** Appeals of this nature reference when the school indicates significant issues that impacted test scores, administration, environmental issues/events; adverse testing conditions; school/community/emergency/crisis; etc. If a school provides information detailing a *significant non recurring* event that impacted test scores, which is clearly outside the school's control the appeal will be deemed as passing the initial review.
3. ***Policy/Methodology Issues.*** Appeals in this category are disagreeing with the way in which the AZ LEARNS formula is used. Appeals of this nature are not accepted or reviewed beyond the initial review.

Review of Evidence

Once the appeals progress through the first tier of the rubric, *initial review*, the evidence provided to support the appeal is evaluated. In this tier, three determinations are possible:

1. ***Compelling evidence:*** in this area, the school or district adequately provides information that leads the committee to conclude that had the circumstance been different, the Achievement Profile would be different as well. For example, if a school presents an argument that their data are different and is able to provide specific and relevant data supporting their claim, they are deemed as providing compelling evidence. If a school has a special circumstance that affects a certain grade and it is able to demonstrate that in those specific grades test scores suffered, the school is deemed as providing compelling evidence.
2. ***Not compelling evidence:*** appeals are categorized in this area when they are able to provide information that a significant issue that *could* have impacted the school's performance but they did not provide detailed, specific information as to specific outcomes that hindered the school's performance. For example, if a school had a school fire mentioned as a special circumstance, the committee would accept that appeal during the initial review. However, during the evidence stage, the committee would need to know when the incident happened, what grades were impacted, and if test scores suffered in that grade (as compared to other grades or prior years). If no specific information is presented, other than there was an incident, that evidence would be deemed as not compelling. Another example of this type of outcome is in the case of where a school mentioned that they had a school fire in one of the buildings which destroyed the 5th grade class room during a specific year. However, when researching the test scores, it was found that the grade in question had higher scores in that year than other grades/classes and other test years despite the incident. In this case, the evidence would not be compelling.
3. ***Not applicable evidence:*** if an appeal is submitted, makes it through the initial review, and presents evidence that is not linked in any way to the performance of the school, the evidence is deemed not applicable. For example, some appeals describe data discrepancies as a problem yet support their data with evidence that argues the AZ LEARNS methodology (which is not eligible for appeal). In cases such as this, the evidence is deemed inapplicable. If the evidence does not directly support the claim made in the appeal, it is deemed not applicable.

Committee Recommendation

Once the appeal and evidence is reviewed, the committee comes to a decision as to the outcome of the appeal. There are three possible outcomes:

1. ***Appeal granted and AZ LEARNS determination changed.*** In these cases, the appeals successfully make it through the initial review and evidentiary stages. It is determined that the points needed to change classifications would have been earned by the school had the special circumstance/data discrepancy not occurred. Therefore, the classification for the school is changed.
2. ***Appeal granted and AZ LEARNS determination remained the same.*** In these cases, the appeals successfully make it through the initial review and evidentiary stages. However, it was determined that the criteria needed to change classifications are not earned by the school had the special circumstance/data discrepancy not occurred. For example, schools can provide information and evidence that their ELL point is not accurate and the committee may determine the school provided information to prove they earned the 1-point set aside for ELL Reclassification in the AZ LEARNS formula. However, if the schools were appealing to change from Highly Performing to Excelling and the one point difference did not impact their 3 year average for percent exceeding which would have needed to change in order for their designation to change to highly performing to excelling, their determination will remain the same. If a school gains adequate points it can move from underperforming to performing or performing plus.
3. ***Appeal Denied.*** In these cases, the appeals do not successfully make it through the initial review and evidentiary stages. Therefore, the classification for the school remains the same.

Appeal Resolution Notes

Schools need to be certain to provide all information/support when submitting the appeal; late information to support the appeal will not be accepted (unless ADE specifically asked for additional information as noted above).

Stage 2 – Notification of Result Sent to Schools

Once all appeals are resolved, notifications will be sent to the schools that filed appeals. The contact person of record for the school will receive an email from Achieve@azed.gov with directions as to how to access appeal information via the Common Logon when the appeal has been processed. Schools are notified before the final public release of the Achievement Profiles as to the outcome of the appeal process. All appeals are final.