



# Arizona State Senate Issue Brief

August 27, 2008

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## TECHNOLOGY ASSISTED PROJECT-BASED INSTRUCTION (TAPBI)

### INTRODUCTION

Technology Assisted Project-Based Instruction (TAPBI) is an educational pilot program in which participating schools may employ technology-assisted learning methodologies, such as computer assisted learning systems, virtual classrooms, virtual tutoring, electronic field trips, on-line help desks, group chat sessions and noncomputer based activities to address the unique needs and learning styles needed in the information age. Currently, seven traditional public schools and seven charter schools in Arizona are authorized to offer the TAPBI program:

- Deer Valley Unified\*
- Lake Havasu Unified
- Marana Unified
- Mesa Unified\*
- Peoria Unified
- Tempe Union
- Tucson Unified
- Arizona Connections Academy
- Arizona Distance Learning (Sequoia Choice)\*
- Arizona Virtual Academy\*
- Kids at Hope Academy
- Humanities and Sciences Academy
- Pinnacle Education Virtual High School
- Primavera Online High School

\*Original sites

### HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

The TAPBI pilot program was established in 1998 to provide an alternative method of serving the educational needs of pupils in kindergarten and grades one through twelve. Initially, the State Board of Education (SBE) and the State Board for Charter Schools (SBCS) each selected two schools (for a total of four) to participate in the TAPBI program to serve up to 500 students. Prior to the schools' selection, the SBE and the Joint Legislative Budget Committee (JLBC) reviewed the proposed curriculum of each potential pilot school and evaluated the projected operational costs.

The TAPBI program expanded in FY 2003-2004 to seven traditional public schools and seven charter schools. Additionally, the 500 student enrollment cap was removed but student eligibility was limited to students who were previously enrolled in and

attending a public school during the previous school year, except for kindergarten students with a sibling already enrolled. The TAPBI participants also became subject to the TerraNova and Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) assessments. Pupils who do not comply with the testing requirement are prohibited from participation if their school administers tests to less than 95 percent of students in the program.

In 2005, the Legislature adopted several changes to the TAPBI program requiring: 1) participating schools to reapply to the SBE and the SBCS every five years and 2) at least 80 percent of the participating students to have attended a public school in the previous school year. Additionally, kindergarten pupils are prohibited from participating unless a sibling is in the program and student enrollment in each participating school is prohibited from growing more than 100 percent in any fiscal year. The SBE and the SBCS were directed to develop a uniform reporting format to be used by schools for enrollment and financial data, and the TAPBI schools must submit comparative data that contrasts academic data of TAPBI and non-TAPBI students. Finally, the Auditor General must complete a performance audit of the TAPBI program by November 1, 2007, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction may recommend that the SBE consider and take a formal action regarding the replacement of a school district that is not complying with the requirements of the program.

### ***INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY AND CURRICULUM***

The 14 school sites were selected to participate in the program based on the depth and breadth of their curriculum choices, the variety of educational methodologies employed and the means of addressing the unique needs and learning styles of targeted student populations. Other factors include the availability of an intranet or private network, filtered research access to the internet, private email and faculty with experience in broadcast television and computer networks. Sites were also evaluated based on their intention to develop community partnerships, offer services

for developmentally disabled populations and the grade levels that will be served.

While the TAPBI programs differ at each school, most pupils either access coursework online “off-site” or physically attend computer-equipped classrooms “on-site” at the school. “Off-site” students can take online courses at their home or at community-based sites with access to online instruction. Student communication generally occurs through email, phone or personal contact (on-site testing, open houses and field trips). Attendance is recorded through electronic time logs or self-reported daily logs (with parental signature) or automated databases that track the various computer-based activities of students as well as mailed assignments and personal contact to establish requisite attendance. Final exams and required standardized tests are held at staffed sites.

The TAPBI schools may use curriculum that are developed “in-house” or purchased from outside curriculum providers. The “in-house” curriculum, developed by educators, can also be shared between the TAPBI sites. The courses are generally self-paced but must be completed within a certain period of time to qualify for credit. Electronic instruction delivery includes online reading materials, interactive exercises, discussion forums, video clips and quizzes; however, students may spend time on learning activities outside of a computer environment

All courses must be completed within a certain number of weeks for the student to receive school credit; however, the allowable course time may vary between TAPBI sites.

### ***FUNDING***

A student may be concurrently enrolled in a non-TAPBI public school and a TAPBI school. The enrollment calculation for a TAPBI pupil is similar to that of a non-TAPBI student, except that attendance is determined through daily logs or automated tracking systems. Schools use attendance data to determine enrollment. The enrollment is then submitted to the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) for the purpose of state aid funding.

While a student may concurrently enroll in a school district or charter school and also participate in the TAPBI program, the school district and charter school must share the enrollment proportionally for that student, based on the percentage of total time that the student is in attendance in each school. Currently, as a result of the 2007 Auditor General report, the ADE is reviewing its current practice of funding concurrently enrolled pupils (*see Auditor General Report below*).

<b>TAPBI ADM and Student Enrollment</b>				
	Charter ADM	District ADM	Total ADM	Student Enrollment
FY 2007	6,856	621	7,477	23,038
FY 2006	4,533	433	4,966	15,138
FY 2005	3,049	417	3,466	10,816
FY 2004	1,335	283	1,618	N/A

Source: FYs 2005-2007 data from “Virtual Classroom ADM” included in the Superintendent’s annual report. FY 2004 data from the SBE annual report.

**REPORTING**

Each school selected by the SBE or the SBCS to participate in TAPBI must submit an annual report to its respective sponsoring entity and to the JLBC. The report must include a description of the school’s educational service offerings, the effects of the technological delivery of specific educational services to identified student populations, data that compares the academic performance of students who participate in TAPBI with other TAPBI and non-TAPBI students and other information regarding participant/parent satisfaction and the effectiveness of the program. The SBE and the JLBC collaboratively compile information submitted in the annual reports by schools and report to the Governor and Legislature by November 15 of each year.

**AUDITOR GENERAL REPORT**

In October 2007, the Auditor General released the performance audit of the TAPBI program required by Laws 2005, Chapter 323. The report found that in FY 2005-2006, TAPBI

enrollment and funding was overstated by an estimated \$6.4 million due to double counting of pupils concurrently enrolled in traditional brick and mortar schools and TAPBI schools. Additionally, the Auditor General stated that summer courses at TAPBI schools were funded thereby allowing a TAPBI student to be funded above the 1.0 ADM statutory limitation.

The report also included two other major findings: 1) high per-pupil costs for TAPBI charters as compared to TAPBI programs at school districts; however, as a whole, TAPBI schools spent approximately \$1,200 per pupil less than Arizona public schools averaged statewide and 2) the effect of TAPBI programs on overall achievement was unclear. The report cited limited usefulness of standardized testing in a learning environment in which pupils attend multiple schools and short tenure in TAPBI programs, especially in high school settings in which standardized testing does not occur each year.

Laws 2008, Chapter 287, prohibited the ADE from correcting state aid for a TAPBI program for FY 2007-2008 or prior fiscal years to address issues pertaining to concurrent enrollment identified in the 2007 Auditor General audit of the TAPBI program.

• **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES** •

- FYs 2004-2007 Annual Report, “*Technology Assisted Project-Based Instruction*,” prepared jointly by the State Board of Education and Joint Legislative Budget Committee.
- “Virtual Classroom ADM” included in the Superintendent’s Annual Reports 2005 through 2007.  
<http://www.ade.az.gov/AnnualReport/AnnualReport2006/>
- TAPBI Statute: A.R.S. § 15-808
- “*Technology Assisted Project-Based Instruction Program*,” prepared by the Auditor General in October 2007.  
[www.auditorgen.state.az.us/Reports/School Districts/Statewide/tapbi/Oct07/TAPBI.pdf](http://www.auditorgen.state.az.us/Reports/School Districts/Statewide/tapbi/Oct07/TAPBI.pdf)