



Arizona State Senate Issue Brief

August 17, 2016

Note to Reader:

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Arizona Online Instruction (AOI)

INTRODUCTION

Arizona Online Instruction (AOI) was created to meet the needs of students using modern technology. The State Board of Education (SBE) and state-approved charter authorizers (charter authorizers) select schools to become online course providers or online schools which facilitate computer assisted learning platforms and virtual classrooms. All AOI students must reside in Arizona and are subject to state testing requirements. According to the Arizona Department of Education, there were 34,858 charter school students and 9,136 district school students enrolled in AOI during the 2014-2015 school year.¹

BACKGROUND

In 1998, Arizona created the Technology Assisted Project-Based Instruction (TAPBI) pilot program as an alternative approach for serving the educational needs of K-12 students. TAPBI focused on improving student achievement and extending academic options beyond the traditional classroom by utilizing computer assisted learning systems, virtual classrooms, virtual tutoring and non-computer based activities. SBE and the State Board for Charter Schools (SBCS) selected four schools to participate in the TAPBI program. Each pilot program was reviewed by SBE and the Joint Legislative Budget Committee based upon proposed curriculum and projected operational costs.²

The TAPBI program expanded in FY 2004 to seven district schools and seven charter schools. Eligibility was limited to students who were enrolled in and attending a public school during the previous school year,

¹ [Annual Report of the Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction](#)

² Laws 1998, Ch. 224, § 2

except for kindergarten students with a sibling already enrolled. TAPBI participants were also subject to the TerraNova and Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) assessments. Students not complying with the testing requirements were prohibited from participation.

In FY 2006, enrollment grew to more than 15,000 students, accounting for 4,475 average daily membership (ADM) and an estimated \$23.8 million in state and local funding.³

In 2009, TAPBI was renamed AOI establishing a statutory program under SBE and SBCS⁴ and lifting the cap on participating AOI school districts and charter schools. In 2015, charter authorizers were authorized to oversee an AOI program.⁵

LEARNING OPTIONS

Online learning options include: 1) supplemental online programs which are separate courses for students already enrolled in traditional schools, including advanced placement and foreign language classes; 2) fully online schools including cyber or virtual schools that utilize a Web-based delivery system to support teacher-led education on the Internet; and 3) blended learning which combines online and in-school learning where students learn partially through online and in-person instruction at school.⁶

AOI STANDARDS

Currently, SBE and charter authorizers jointly develop standards for approving online course providers and online schools based upon the following criteria:

- 1) the depth and breadth of curriculum choices;
- 2) the variety of educational methodologies employed by the school and the means of addressing the unique needs and learning styles of targeted pupil populations;
- 3) the availability of an intranet or private network to safeguard pupils against predatory and pornographic elements of the internet;
- 4) the availability of filtered research access to the internet;
- 5) the availability of private individual electronic mail between pupils, teachers, administrators and parents in order to protect the confidentiality of pupil records and information;
- 6) the availability of faculty members who are experienced with computer networks, the internet and computer animation;
- 7) the extent to which the school intends to develop partnerships with universities, community colleges and private businesses; the services offered to populations with developmental disabilities; and
- 8) the grade levels that will be served.⁷

There are currently 58 approved AOI programs operated by school districts of which 27 are online only⁸ and 21 AOI

³ Arizona Auditor General
<https://www.azauditor.gov/sites/default/files/TAPBI.pdf>

⁴ Laws 2009, Ch. 95, § 27

⁵ Laws 2015, Ch. 147, § 1

⁶ National Conference of State Legislatures
[Online Learning Options](#)

⁷ A.R.S. § 15-808 (A)

⁸ Arizona State Board of Education [“Approved AOI Programs”](#)

programs at charter schools of which 10 are online only.⁹

CREDIT TRANSFER

A school district in this state must accept credits from courses or instructional programs taken by students previously enrolled in another school district or charter school. However, a school district governing board may determine whether transfer credits will be considered elective or core credit.¹⁰

Students transferring credit from a charter school, school district or AOI to a school district or charter school must be notified which elective and core credits will be accepted. Within 10 school days of receiving the notification, the student may request an examination in each course in which core credit was denied.

For each passing score a student receives on an examination, the school district or charter school must accept the credit as core credit. All other credit will be considered elective credit. The examination must be aligned to competency requirements as outlined in A.R.S. § 15-701.01 and designed and evaluated by a teacher in the school district or charter school who teaches the subject matter on which the exam is based.¹¹

A fee may not be assessed to a student taking an examination in a course to earn academic credit from a school district or charter school if the course credit was earned in an AOI course or at any public school within Arizona.¹²

⁹ Arizona State Board for Charter Schools
[“Approved AOI Schools”](#)

¹⁰ A.R.S. § 15-701.01 (H)

¹¹ A.R.S. § 15-701.01 (I)

¹² A.R.S. § 15-808 (I)

REPORTING

Each new school approved for online instruction is placed on a probationary status until the school applies to be removed from that status and demonstrates the academic integrity of its instruction with improvement in student academic performance.

SBE or charter authorizers may remove any probationary school from AOI that fails to demonstrate improvement in academic performance when measured against goals in its approved application and the state’s accountability system over the course of three years.¹³

SBE and charter authorizers establish annual reporting mechanisms for participating AOI schools. The Arizona Department of Education then compiles a report for submittal to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and President of the Senate by November 15 of each year.

FUNDING

Students can be concurrently enrolled in a school district or a charter school and also participate in AOI. For these students, the sum of their ADM and daily attendance cannot exceed 1.0. If the sum of the ADM or daily attendance is greater than 1.0, the sum will be reduced to 1.0 and be apportioned between the school district (unless the school district is a joint technical education district) or a charter school and AOI. This amount is based upon the percentage of total time the student is enrolled or in attendance in the school district or charter school and AOI.¹⁴ According to statute, ADM is calculated for the first 100 or 200 days in session, as

¹³ A.R.S. § 15-808 (B)

¹⁴ A.R.S. § 15-901(vi)

applicable, for the current year. However, for AOIs, ADM is not calculated on the 100th day of instruction. AOI students do not incur absences and can generate average daily attendance during any hour of the day, any day of the week and at any time between July 1 and June 30 of each fiscal year.¹⁵

Each participating school must maintain a daily log accounting for the amount of time spent on academic tasks by each AOI student. The daily log is used to qualify the students participating in AOI to calculate the average daily attendance for each school district or charter school.¹⁶

A full-time enrolled student in AOI will be funded at 95 percent of the base support level that would be calculated if that student was enrolled full-time in a school district or charter school that does not participate in AOI. A part-time enrolled student in AOI will be funded at 85 percent of the base support level. In both cases, district additional assistance and charter additional assistance will be calculated in the same way as if the student were enrolled in a district or a charter school that does not participate in AOI.¹⁷ For additional information about the base support level, please see the [Arizona School Finance Issue Brief](#).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Arizona Department of Education
Arizona Online Instruction
<http://www.azed.gov/innovativelearning/azonlineinstruction/>
- Arizona State Board of Education
Arizona Online Instruction Program
<https://azsbe.az.gov/resources/arizona-online-instruction>
- Annual Report of the Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction
<http://www.azed.gov/superintendent/files/2016/01/safr-2015-volume-i.pdf>
- National Education Policy Center
Virtual Schools Report 2016
<http://nepc.colorado.edu/files/publications/RB-Miron%20Virtual%20Schools.pdf>
- “The Race to Online: Arizona experiments with virtual K-12 schools”
The Arizona Republic
<http://archive.azcentral.com/news/education/online-school/>

¹⁵ A.R.S. § 15-808 (F)

¹⁶ A.R.S. § 15-808 (E)

¹⁷ A.R.S. § 15-808 (F) (1) and (2)