



# A LETTER FROM ASBCS

"To improve public education in Arizona by sponsoring charter schools that provide quality educational choices"

## Board Meeting Summary

The ASBCS January Board Meeting was held Monday, January 10, 2022.

Congratulations to President Mary Ellen Lee and Vice President Hans Dieter Klose on their re-elections for 2022! Their continued leadership has been instrumental to the success of the Board, and we are so grateful for their efforts and dedication.

See all Board action taken at the January 2022 meeting [here](#).

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 14, 2022 at 9 am.

## Pop-in Process Reminders

All schools in a scheduled board process (such as interval review) will receive a pop-in visit in the scheduled review year. These visits can occur prior to or after the virtual document review. **It is important to note that any school in the portfolio could receive a pop-in visit at any time throughout a school year, and Board staff hopes to visit as many schools as possible this year.**

Pop-ins are intended to familiarize Board staff with schools, build relationships with charter and school leaders, and to see the hard and good work schools do each and every day. At a pop-in visit, Board staff will conduct classroom observations, review key compliance documentation, and meet with school administration (if available) for a quick conversation.

### **Pop-in Preparedness Tips:**

- Prepare Front Desk Staff (or anyone that might be covering the front desk)
  - Let them know Board staff may arrive for a visit at any time
  - Familiarize them with the documents Board staff may ask for
  - Tell them what you expect from them (who to contact, where to have Board staff sit, etc.)
- Prepare Teaching Staff
  - Ensure that they know that Board staff visits schools and classrooms regularly
  - Let them know that when we pop-in, they should just continue their instruction as usual
  - Reassure them that we are not evaluating their instruction, but rather, verifying compliance with the contractual program of instruction
- Have Documents readily available
  - Use the Pop-in Preparation Checklist to ensure you have items ready for review anytime we visit your school
  - Consider having a monthly check of these documents to ensure they are up to date (specifically the fire marshal inspection, staff list, and fingerprint cards)

For more information about Pop-in visits, please review the following documents on our website.

[Pop-in Preparation Checklist](#)

## Fingerprinting Facts & Reminders

Board staff has seen an increase in the number of fingerprinting issues found in school reviews. As a result, we wish to offer the following reminders to all charters:

1. All staff, including contractors and subcontractors, must be fingerprinted, and those cards (or Department of Public Safety fingerprint checks—depending on the individual's role) must be available for review at all times. This includes service providers for students with disabilities (OT, PT, etc.), IT contractors, maintenance people, night janitors, etc.
2. All instructional staff must have a current, valid IVP fingerprint card. A standard level one card is not sufficient for instructional positions, including aides.
3. The emergency hire provision only applies to teaching staff. Additionally, if this provision is being utilized, all components must be fulfilled, and documentation of all components must be available for review. Board staff has [guidance](#) available to help schools complete this process on our website, which was developed directly from A.R.S. §15-183(C)(5).

## Firearms Survey for School Year 2020–2021

From the Arizona Department of Education

Superintendents and Charter Holders:

The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) is required to report all firearm events in Arizona schools and the associated disciplinary actions. This data demonstrates compliance with A.R.S. § Stat. 13-3102(A)(12), and A.R.S. §15-841 (G) and also validates compliance with the federal Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) of 1994, Title 18, Section 921.

To accomplish this task, a simple survey document has been created to capture the required information around any incident related to firearms in schools. The survey is structured in such a way that, if your Local Education Agency (LEA) had no incidents during the 2020-2021 school year, answer "No" to the initial question and submit the survey to ADE. **Please keep in mind that this Firearms survey should be completed by LEAs, not schools.**

If the LEA has experienced one or more incidents related to firearms, there will be a series of questions that capture information on each incident, the associated disciplinary actions taken, and once complete, the LEA submits the survey to ADE.

It is anticipated that the survey will take minimal time to complete, as the information requested should be readily available at each LEA. Please submit this survey no later than Sunday, January 16, 2022. The survey can be found at the below link.

[Firearms Survey](#)

## Encouraging Safe Schools

From the Arizona Department of Education

Good afternoon,

As Arizonans return from holiday break, many parts of our state are experiencing a high spread of COVID-19. The Arizona Department of Education encourages our public district and charter schools to continue utilizing existing mitigation strategies and to consider additional strategies to prevent COVID-19 from further impacting our students, teachers, and families. The following was compiled from an October 2021 science brief from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention:

“When prevention strategies are consistently and correctly used, the risk of SARS-CoV-2 [COVID-19] transmission in the school environment is decreased. Use of multiple strategies – also called layered prevention – provides greater protection in breaking transmission chains than implementing a single strategy” – Science Brief: Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs

#### Specific Strategies:

- Consistent and correct mask use reduces the spread of COVID-19. In K-12 settings, the CDC recommends universal indoor masking regardless of vaccination status.
- Strategic physical distancing. When physical distancing is impossible, the consistent maintenance of other layered prevention strategies, notably masking and student cohorts, limits COVID-19 transmission. However, schools should prioritize a more significant physical distancing of at least 6 feet when people who are not fully vaccinated are interacting where masks cannot be used, such as eating lunch indoors.
- Testing
  - Screening Testing is intended to identify persons who are infected but without symptoms (or before the development of symptoms) who may be contagious so that measures can be taken to prevent further spread of the virus.
  - Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) Pooled Testing is free for all Arizona K-12 schools. All students in a class, pod, or cohort swab their own noses and place their swab in a single tube, the pooling step. The swabs in that tube are then run as a single sample, using one test. Individuals in a positive pool, a rare occurrence, then receive a follow-up test (i.e., BinaxNOW) to determine who in the pool is positive.
  - Test to Stay (TTS) is a practice comprised of contact tracing and serial testing (testing that is sequentially repeated) to allow close contacts who are not fully vaccinated to continue in-person learning during their quarantine period. While implementation of TTS may vary, contact tracing and testing, as well as masking of contacts during their in-school quarantine period, are integral to minimizing the risk of transmission.
- Prevent transmission at sports and other extracurricular activities by relocating activities to outdoors or other well-ventilated venues and encouraging or requiring vaccination of eligible students and adults who support these activities.

#### Examples of Success:

- In a study of K-12 schools in St. Louis with multiple layered prevention strategies in place, only 2% of contacts of COVID-19 cases in the schools tested positive for the virus; this was despite high community transmission rates.
- A study of 17 rural Wisconsin K-12 schools that were using full in-person instruction found only seven cases among students that were linked to in-school spread; the study noted limited spread among children in cohorts and observed no documented transmission to or from staff members. These Wisconsin schools required mask use (92% observed compliance), placed students less than 6 feet apart in classrooms, and used cohorting at a time of high community transmission.

As a reminder, federal recovery dollars (ESSER I, II, and III funding allocated to schools) can be used to fund COVID-19 mitigation strategies. Applications for ESSER II funds are due now and applications for ESSER III funds are due February 1, 2022. Learn more and apply for available funding on our ESSER page.

We know it has been challenging to have conversations about COVID-19 over the last year – and we appreciate the work that has been done thus far to keep students, families, and teachers safe. You can read the entire science brief by clicking the button below.

Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs

Updated CDC Quarantine & Isolation Guidance

## Incorporating Mental Health Instruction

From the Arizona Department of Education

Last year, the Arizona legislature passed SB 1376 (Schools; Curriculum; Mental Health), which went into effect in Fall 2021. The bill amends ARS 15-701.02 by requiring health education instruction to include mental health instruction.

The new law includes the following:

- Requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to mandate that all health education instruction include mental health instruction. Mental health instruction may be included in a health education course or another existing course.
- Specifies that mental health instruction must incorporate the multiple dimensions of health.
- Directs SBE to consult with mental health experts, mental health advocacy organizations, and the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) when adopting this requirement.

During the October 2021 State Board of Education meeting, the board amended rules R7-2-301 and R7-2-302 requiring healthy and physical education to include mental health instruction and allowing mental health instruction to be included in other subject areas. These new rules are effective as of October 26, 2021.

These new rules align with ongoing mental health and wellness priorities at the Arizona Department of Education, and we are proud to help implement this new legislation with this resource one-pager, including:

- Definitions of mental health, mental health instruction, and social-emotional competencies
- Recommendations for mental health instruction in standalone health education courses and existing courses
- Resources to help evaluate potential curricula, Arizona's SEL competencies, and a school and behavioral health resource guide

Resources Supporting SB 1376 – Schools; Curriculum; Mental Health

## Public Comment – Accountability Waiver

From the Arizona Department of Education

### **NOTICE OF PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Any individual or organization may submit written comments on the proposed waiver pursuant to 34 C.F.R. §200.6(c)(4). Written comments shall be accepted through January 26, 2022.

Due to the extraordinary circumstances created by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) invited State educational agencies (SEAs) to apply for a waiver from the accountability requirements of the ESEA for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and the assessment requirements for the 2019-2020 school year. As a result, many SEAs have not implemented all aspects of their statewide accountability systems or identified schools for support and improvement since fall 2019. Upon receiving an accountability waiver for the 2020-2021 school year, each SEA agreed that it would resume identifying schools for comprehensive, targeted, and additional targeted support and improvement using data from the 2021-2022 school year in the fall of 2022 to ensure school identification resumes as quickly as possible.

The department has provided a streamlined process to modify approved ESEA consolidated State plans for the 2021-2022 school year as they implement accountability and school identification requirements under section 1111 of the ESEA in order to make accountability determinations and identify schools in fall 2022.

Arizona is requesting the following one-time adjustments due to COVID-19 pandemic:

- Shifting timeline for long term goals and measurements of interim progress forward by two years
- Reducing impact of chronic absenteeism identification criterion due to the continued surge of COVID-19 and its unpredictable effect on attendance, by reducing the points available for this component by changing School Quality or Student Success Indicator(s), chronic absenteeism from 10% to 2% for K-8 and omitting it from K-12 and K-11
- Not counting 2019-20 or 2020-21 in the four-year limit to exit CSI status or (A) TSI, allowing schools additional time to exit before additional requirements are imposed
- Using non-consecutive three years of data for annual TSI identification
- Allow schools identified for improvement in Fall 2022 (CSI and (A)TSI to exit after one year. Exit Criteria for fall of 2023 only:
  - a minimum of one year of increased achievement; and
  - implementation of school improvement goals, strategies, and action steps, in state required Integrated Action Plan; and
  - above bottom 5% of Title I schools considering all applicable criteria.
- Extend the allowable duration of the subgrant period from four to five years for LEAs with schools that were implementing ESEA section 1003 subgrants in school year 2020-2021, as needed to allow current schools to complete and sustain the school improvement work.

We invite you to share your feedback on Arizona's waiver through January 26, 2022 .You may submit your comments electronically, using the following link.

[Submit Public Comment](#)

### **Questions? Please reach out to...**

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## **Reminders**

**Next Regular Board Meeting**

Date: Monday, February 14, 2022

Time: 9:00 AM

Location: Virtual & In-Person

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