**BASIS Scottsdale Depends on Failure to Succeed**

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BASIS Scottsdale charter school was named the second best high school in the nation for 2016 by U.S. News and World Reports. BASIS Scottsdale is the best school in Arizona according to the report. Just what makes it the best school?

The criteria established by U.S. News are described in the Technical Guide for 2016:

*The “Best High Schools” Method*

*U.S. News & World Report (U.S. News)*

 *publishes the “Best High Schools” rankings to identify the top-performing public high schools in the United States. These rankings are based on four aspects of school performance: (1) the performance of all students on state assessments in reading and mathematics; (2) the performance of disadvantaged student subgroups—defined as Black/African-American students, Hispanic/Latino students, and students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or who are economically disadvantaged as determined by the state—on these assessments; (3)*

*the school’s graduation rate; and (4) the degree to which high schools prepare students for college based on the numbers of students taking and passing college*

*-level courses.* (<http://www.usnews.com/pubfiles/best-high-schools-technical-appendix.pdf>)

BASIS Scottsdale’s statistics are very impressive. According to U.S. News, Basis Scottsdale is 53% minority. 100% of all students were proficient on the 2013-14 AIMS Reading and Math tests and 100% of disadvantaged students were proficient. The average senior took 11.3 Advanced Placement tests for college credit, with a 96% pass rate. Only one other school in the nation has such achievement. (<http://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/arizona/districts/basis-school-inc/basis-scottsdale-871>)

U.S. News report that BASIS Scottsdale is 53% minority implies that it is 53% disadvantaged. U.S. News defines disadvantaged as Black and Hispanic students and they make up only 9% of the total 5-12 enrollment at BASIS Scottsdale. The rest of the minority students are Asian – there were 335 enrolled grades 5-12.

In reality, BASIS Scottsdale has only 8 disadvantaged students in grades 9-12. There are no students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. Five Hispanic students, three Black students, and one student of two or more races are enrolled in high school. The senior class of 2013-14 has no disadvantaged students, 19 White students, and 15 Asian students, and one student of two or more races. See Table 1.

Table 1. Ethnicity of BASIS Scottsdale 2013-14

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|

| **Grade** | **Two or more races** | **White** | **Hispanic** | **Hawaiian** | **Black** | **Asian** | **American Indian** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 9th Grade | 0 | 41 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 34 | 0 |
| 10th Grade | 0 | 40 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 46 | 0 |
| 11th Grade | 0 | 28 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 14 | 0 |
| 12th Grade | 1 | 19 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 15 | 0 |

 |
| Total Enrollment  | 756  |

<http://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/arizona/districts/basis-school-inc/basis-scottsdale-871/student-body>

When U.S. News reports that 100% of disadvantaged students were proficient on the AIMS test, they are talking about nine students, 3.6% of the high school enrollment – not 53%. Since the test was only given to 10th grade students, only two disadvantaged students took the AIMS test in 2014. No disadvantaged students graduated from BASIS Scottsdale in 2014.

Why didn’t any disadvantaged students graduate from BASIS Scottsdale? The same reason that of the 125 students enrolled in sixth grade in 2007, only 35 graduated six years later in 2014. BASIS Inc. systematically eliminates all but the brightest students. Its ranking by US News depends on 70% of students between grades 6-12 leaving the school. See Table 2.

Table 2. BASIS Scottsdale Cohort Enrollment Graduating Class of 2014

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Grade | Year | Class Enrollment |
|  |  |  |
| 6 | 2007-08 | 125 |
| 7 | 2008-09 | 104 |
| 8 | 2009-10 | 94 |
| 9 | 2010-11 | 48 |
| 10 | 2011-12 | 43 |
| 11 | 2012-13 | 40 |
| 12 | 2013-14 | 35 |

October 1 Enrollment Report: <http://www.azed.gov/research-evaluation/arizona-enrollment-figures/> Enrollment data for 2007-08 through 2009-10 National Center for Education Statistics <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/tableGenerator.aspx>

There are two policies at all BASIS ed. schools that force students to drop out of the BASIS program: the advanced curriculum and the required performance benchmarks all students must meet to be promoted.

BASIS claims to have one of the most accelerated programs in the world. The BASIS ed.. webpage brags:

*“Our curriculum in these grades (5-8) is designed to provide one of the most advanced middle school programs available in the world, fully integrating the sciences, arts, math, language, and reading.” (*Curriculum Overview at http://basisschools.org/)

*“The BASIS.ed program for grades 8–12 is widely recognized as one of the most academically-advanced high school programs in the world.” (*Curriculum Overview at http://basisschools.org/)

The advanced program in grades 5-7 is indicative of the extremely accelerated curriculum at BASIS: See Table 3.

Table 3. BASIS 5-7 Curriculum

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Grade 5 | Grade 6 | Grade 7 |
| Math | Math 7/8 or Algebra 1 | Pre-Algebra or, Algebra !, Algebra 2 | Algebra 1, Algebra 2, Pre Calculus A or AB |
| Science | Geography | Biology, Chemistry, Physics | Biology, Chemistry, Physics |
| Foreign Language | Latin | Latin | French, Latin, Mandrin, or Spanish |

(BASIS Promotional Brochere 2014-15, no longer available on line)

Fifth grade students are encouraged to take high school Algebra 1 and in seventh grade Algebra 1 is mandatory. Seventh grade students are required to pass a comprehensive exam on Algebra 1 or they are not promoted to eighth grade. This is the first barrier students must hurdle to stay at BASIS. Many leave at the end of seventh grade in BASIS schools.

In eighth grade, students are required to pass comprehensive exams, including using the AP World History test: See Table 4

Table4. Required Eighth Grade Exams

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS | GRADE 8 |
|  |  |
| MATH | Algebra 2 |
| ENGLISH | English |
| SCIENCE | Biology, Chemistry, and Physics |
| HISTORY\*\* | AP World History |
| ECONOMICS | Economics |
| LANGUAGE | French, Latin, Mandarin, or Spanish |

(BASIS Promotional Brochure 2014-15, no longer available on line)

Students must pass all of these comprehensive exams or they aren’t promoted to high school. The Class of 2013-14 dropped from 94 in eighth grade to 48 students in ninth grade the following year.

The seventh grade requirement to pass Algebra 1 and the comprehensive exams in eighth grade reduced the class of 2013-14 from 104 in seventh grade to 48 students in ninth grade. Sixty one percent of the 125 students enrolled in 6th grade dropped out of BASIS by 9th grade.

In high school, the requirements increase. High school students are required to pass at least six Advanced Placement (AP) tests granting college credit to graduate. AP tests are used as final examinations at BASIS Scottsdale.

According to the College Board, developers of the AP tests, only 3.6% of all students in the U.S. take six AP tests, let alone pass them. U.S. News reports that BASIS Scottsdale seniors averaged 11.3 AP tests taken and that 96% of the tests were passed. Only four tens of one percent of high school students in the nation take 11 AP tests. The percentage that passes eleven tests is not available, but over 50% of all AP tests do not receive passing scores. See Table 5.

Table 5. AP Tests Taken Over Four Years 2011-2014

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | AP Tests taken 2011-2014 |
|  |  |  |
| Number of Exams Taken per Student | Frequency | Percent |
| 1 |  979,928  | 41.8 |
| 2 |  492,118  | 21 |
| 3 |  305,908  | 13.1 |
| 4 |  199,354  | 8.5 |
| 5 |  129,308  | 5.5 |
| 6 |  85,372  | 3.6 |
| 7 |  56,174  | 2.4 |
| 8 |  37,636  | 1.6 |
| 9 |  23,613  | 1 |
| 10 |  14,546  | 0.6 |
| 11 |  8,432  | 0.4 |
| 12 |  4,756  | 0.2 |
| 13 |  2,540  | 0.1 |
| 14 |  1,321  | 0.1 |
| More than 14 |  1,522  | 0 |

<http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/research/2014/Number-of-Exams-per-Student-2014.pdf>

The 35 BASIS Scottsdale seniors who remain in school are in the top .4% of all students in the U.S. – and probably much higher if they actually passed 11 AP tests.

The question is: Is the best school in Arizona one where only affluent White and Asian students, that are among the most gifted students in the U.S., find success? Imagine a public school that required all seventh grade students to pass Algebra 1, eighth grade students to pass comprehensive exam in Algebra 2, Physics, and Latin, or requiring high school students to pass six AP tests to graduate. These requirements would surely make public schools much more successful, and get rid of all those troublesome average students, special needs children, and the unmotivated. A public district where 70% of students drop out between 6th and 12th grade is unheard of.

Public districts should learn the BASIS lesson – forcing 70% of students to dropout is the key to success in twelth grade. – to be the best in the state.

BASIS Scottsdale is an insult to the educators who work magic every day to make every student, regardless of ability, ethnicity, or income level successful rather than systematically finding ways to make them leave so the school can look better to U.S. News. U.S. News provides BASIS ed. millions of dollars worth of free advertising by not telling the whole story.

The truth is BASIS Scottsdale is only successful because they eliminate all but the best students by the 12th grade. You be the judge if they represent the best public education in Arizona.