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2008 AIMS results show that America's best public school, BASIS Tucson, is tops in Arizona, too.

Tucson — BASIS Tucson School, currently ranked as the nation's very best public school for preparing students for college, according to *Newsweek's* Challenge Index, stands at or near the top among all Arizona schools in all categories of the 2008 AIMS tests.

Last week, the Arizona Department of Education released its yearly results of the Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) tests. The tests measure Arizona students' progress toward mastering specific subject matter. AIMS tracks student and school success by measuring the percentage of students from each school who fail, meet, or exceed state standards for proficiency. For high schoolers, passing the AIMS test is a requirement for graduation and is first taken in the tenth grade.

The results show that BASIS Tucson finished first or tied for first among all Arizona high schools in all AIMS test categories—math, reading, and writing—with 100% of BASIS tenth-grade students passing each of the tests.

Like BASIS Tucson's high school, its middle school stood at or near the top of AIMS scores. It was first or tied for first among Arizona schools in percentage of students passing AIMS in four separate categories—sixth-grade math, seventh-grade math, and eighth-grade math and reading—with 100% of students passing each of these tests. Additionally, BASIS Tucson students earned passing rates of 99% on four other AIMS tests: sixth-grade reading and writing, seventh-grade reading, and eighth-grade writing.

Perhaps more impressive than BASIS Tucson's pass rates is the percentages of its students who *exceeded* the state standards on each AIMS test—with an exceeding score providing a more robust measure of student competence than merely a passing score. For example, an amazing 92% of BASIS Tucson tenth graders exceeded the AIMS standards in math. This was the highest percentage of any high school in Arizona, well ahead of second-place University High School's 81% and far above the statewide average of 14%.

Making this feat all the more impressive is that BASIS Tucson is an open enrollment public charter school. This distinguishes it from such schools as University High School, which is comprised of gifted students who must pass stringent entrance exams, allowing it to draw its students from the cream of the Tucson Unified School District. As the AIMS results show, the BASIS method enables all students, not just the gifted, make the most of their potential.

What makes BASIS students so well prepared for these standardized tests? In large part, it's the world class college preparatory curriculum that starts in the fifth grade and is based on combining the best of European, Asian, and American methods. BASIS requires that every 7th grade student complete Algebra I. Every 8th grade student at BASIS is required to complete Algebra II. Putting this into context, Arizona has just revised its math standards, requiring Algebra I as a prerequisite for *high school* graduation for the class of 2012. That means BASIS's requirement that 8th grade students complete Algebra II before progressing to the next grade level is more stringent than the state's current requirements for graduating seniors.

This demanding curriculum is continued at the upper school level, which is centered around the College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) program. BASIS Tucson currently offers 15 AP courses ranging from English Language and Composition to Calculus. Upper School students are required to take at least 6 AP exams to graduate, and unique among American high schools, the results of these exams count toward the student's final grade in the subject. BASIS Tucson students' success on AP and AIMS exams helped the school earn a #1 ranking among America's public schools on *Newsweek's* Challenge Index and a #16 national ranking by *U.S. News and World Report*. The latter includes among the 18,500 schools ranked some of the most selective public high schools in the nation such as Stuyvesant in NYC and Thomas Jefferson in suburban Washington DC.

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