



February 17, 2015 / Debora Mitchell/Beat the Odds Institute / [Stories by You](#)

Six schools with minority-intensive, low-income student populations received gold awards and have been named “Beat the Odds Schools” by [Beat the Odds Institute](#), an initiative of the [Center for the Future of Arizona](#). Eight schools earned silver and 12 earned bronze awards.

Based upon methodology from best-selling author Jim Collins, Beat the Odds is a rigorous, multi-year school improvement program providing mentoring and training for principals. It focuses on K-12 schools where at least 50 percent of the students are on free or reduced lunch and at least 50 percent are minority, primarily Latino.



The presentation of the Beat the Odds School honor at Burk Elementary School in Gilbert Unified School District. Photo courtesy Beat the Odds Institute

Gold award winners for the 2013-2014 school year are [Burk Elementary](#) in the [Gilbert Unified School District](#); [Cortez High School](#) and [Washington High School](#) in the [Glendale Union High School District](#); [L. Thomas Heck Middle School](#) in the [Litchfield Elementary District](#); [Emerson Elementary](#) in [Mesa Public Schools](#); and [Franklin Police and Fire High School](#) in the [Phoenix Union High School District](#).

Only schools that attain gold-medal status — the highest level of achievement in the Beat the Odds program — are conferred the title of a Beat the Odds School.

Marjorie Kaplan, executive director of Beat the Odds Institute, said, “Our award winners demonstrate that demography is not destiny. They have overcome obstacles and improved academic performance through their commitment to our Six Keys to Success.”

Based upon research, the six keys are: a strong and steady principal, a clear bottom line, ongoing assessment, collaborative solutions, a program built on individual student needs and a commitment to stick with the program. “Successful schools do things differently and don’t make excuses,” Kaplan said.

Participation in Beat the Odds, now in its eighth year, is open to K-12 public, charter and tribal schools throughout the state. Additional information is available at www.BeatTheOddsInstitute.org.

“This is just further validation for our staff that we are doing the right things for our students, and our amazing students are responding, rising to our high expectations of them,” said Lorenzo Cabrera, principal of Franklin Police and Fire High School.

Franklin Police and Fire is a small specialty school of 310 students that offers career training in law enforcement and firefighting along with a full high school curriculum. Last fall, the school was named a National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education, one of only four in Arizona. Franklin has earned an “A” grade each of the last four years, according to Arizona’s A-F Accountability labels.



The National Center for Educational Achievement (NCEA) recognized Franklin as an Arizona Higher Performing School, exceeding expectations in college and career readiness. In 2014 AIMS, 100% of Franklin sophomores passed the reading exam, and 99% passed writing last spring. The school’s most recent four-year graduation rate is 95%, and the small graduating class last year earned over \$2 million in scholarships.

Franklin Police and Fire is the second Phoenix Union school to earn a “Beat the Odds” Gold School designation. Metro Tech High School became a “Beat the Odds” School in 2013.

Gold Award Level – Beat the Odds Schools and Principals

Beat the Odds Gold Level schools must have a “B” or better from Arizona Department of Education and must demonstrate consistently improved AIMS scores over three years, plus other criteria.

Gilbert Unified School District – Gilbert

Burk Elementary/Principal Brad Paes

Glendale Union High School District – Glendale

Cortez High School/Former Principal Reid Chitwood and current Principal Walter Sampson
Washington High School/Former Principal Carol Lippert and current Principal Tami Strege

Litchfield Elementary School District – Litchfield Park



L. Thomas Heck Middle School/Principal Ron Sterr

Mesa Public Schools – Mesa

Emerson Elementary School/Former Principal Mark Norris and current Principal Christel Arbogast

Phoenix Union High School District – Phoenix

Franklin Police & Fire High School/Principal Lorenzo Cabrera

Silver Award Level – Beat the Odds Schools and Principals

Beat the Odds Silver Level schools must have a “C” or better from Arizona Department of Education and must have ongoing assessment data demonstrating achievement in the majority of grade levels, plus other criteria.

Amphitheater Unified School District – Tucson

Holoway Elementary/Principal Chris Gutierrez

Buckeye Elementary School District – Buckeye

West Park Elementary/Principal Nick Forgette

Fowler Elementary School District – Phoenix

Sun Canyon Elementary/Principal Jonathan Rohloff

Glendale Elementary School District – Glendale

Melvin E. Sine School/Principal Tish Mineer
Sunset Vista Elementary/Principal Dr. Bryan Richman

Paradise Valley Unified School District – Phoenix
North Canyon High School/Principal Elaine Jacobs

Tolleson Elementary School District – Tolleson
Sheely Farms Elementary/Principal Melissa Marze

Tolleson Union High School District – Tolleson
Westview High School/Principal Michele Wilson

Bronze Award Level – Beat the Odds Schools and Principals

Beat the Odds Bronze Level schools must have a “C” or better from Arizona Department of Education and must have full participation in mentoring and a mentor recommendation, plus other criteria.

Edkey Schools – Tempe
Children’s First/Principal Jevon Lewis

Espiritu Charter Schools – Phoenix
NFL-YET Academy/Principal Arlahee Ruiz

Isaac School District – Phoenix
Isaac Middle School/Principal Bree Honeycutt
Joseph Zito Elementary/Principal Gerard Hernandez

Littleton Elementary School District – Tolleson
Tres Rios Elementary/Principal Dr. Seu Hee Ledet

Mesa Public Schools – Mesa
Longfellow Elementary/Principal David Christensen
Ida Redbird Elementary/Principal Nick Parker

Peoria Unified School District – Peoria
Desert Palms/Principal Richard Troy

Phoenix Union High School District – Phoenix
Alhambra High School/Principal Claudio Coria

Pima Prevention Partnership – Arizona Collegiate is located in Phoenix
Arizona Collegiate High School/Principal Mike Dunbar

Scottsdale Unified School District- Scottsdale
Coronado High School/Principal Alyssa Tarkington
Tonalea Elementary/Principal Lori Pizzo

About the Center for the Future of Arizona

The Center for the Future of Arizona www.ArizonaFuture.org is an independent 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization. Its mission is to help Arizonans shape and define the future through an action-oriented agenda focused on contemporary issues and topics critical to the state. More than a think tank, the center is an independent “do tank” that combines public-policy research with collaborative partnerships and initiatives that will create new opportunities for all Arizonans. For more information, please contact Marjorie Kaplan at 602-496-1360 or marjorie.kaplan@asu.edu.

- See more at: <http://azednews.com/2015/02/17/six-arizona-schools-named-beat-the-odds-schools/#sthash.loYy6WvA.dpuf>

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