



Beat the Odds Website Initiative FY 2009 Annual Report

The Center for the Future of Arizona was created to improve the quality of life for all Arizonans. As a “do tank” emphasizing action and results, the Center keeps important issues in public view by providing focused attention and thoughtful action on pressing problems. One of the most important issues of our time is access to high quality education for all Arizonans. The Beat the Odds project is an example of the Center’s “do tank” role and an early indicator of its intention to use electronic communication tools for collaborative, thoughtful action to improve education in Arizona.

The Center’s Beat the Odds (BTO) Institute was created to serve as the umbrella organization for all activities designed to implement the findings and recommendations of a landmark Arizona study, “Why Some Schools with Latino Children Beat the Odds...and Others Don’t.” The study is important because it found 12 Arizona schools that were successfully serving mostly poor, mostly Latino students. It demonstrates clearly that “demography is not destiny,” that all children can learn, and that our schools can be transformed to meet the human and social needs of the 21st century.

The Institute’s goal is to implement the “six keys to success” identified in the study by helping school leaders embed the principles into their culture and operating behavior.

The establishment of the BTO Institute represents a major commitment by the Center to further disseminate the study and implement its findings at the school and district level. In so doing, the Institute is mobilizing Arizona around a new goal – significantly improving “achievement per student” in all schools.

The central thrust of the BTO Institute is the BTO School Partners Program, described below, and a key to the success of both is the online resource center—the sophisticated, highly interactive website funded by the Arizona Board of Regents Technology and Research Initiative Fund (TRIF) Regents Innovation Fund. The resource center provides online tools for users to assess their leadership skills and develop practical plans for incorporating BTO concepts into their schools. To participants in the School Partners Program, the resource center offers a forum for online discussion and dialogue and provides access to new research, directories and links to other organizations actively engaged in education reform including the state universities. Significant progress in developing and expanding the Partners Program and enhancing the website has been made in FY 2009, the third year of TRIF funding.



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TECHNOLOGY AND RESEARCH INITIATIVE FUND (TRIF)

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The Six Keys to Success

Disciplined Thought

1. Clear Bottom Line - focus on achievement per student.
2. Ongoing Assessment - use data in the classroom to drive performance.

Disciplined People

3. Strong and Steady Principal - keep pushing ahead no matter the roadblocks.
4. Collaborative Solutions - share the responsibility for success.

Disciplined Action

5. Stick with the Program - pick a good one and make it work.
6. Built to Suit - customize instruction; one size does not fit all.

Performance Analysis

Enhancement of Online Resource Center/Website

Phase 1 of the Beat the Odds website was completed in 2008. Phase 2, which was completed in 2009, included construction of functions to track policy/legislation as well as the further development of the site to adapt it to the needs of the Partners through the continued refinement and customization of tools and resources. During FY 2009, the student program to support the ongoing research content of the website was initiated with additional development planned for 2010. Also under development, is the addition of e-commerce capability to support the addition of significant training and implementation tools, including a BTO Handbook which was completed in 2009 and is available now in a pilot version. Visit <http://www.beattheoddsinstitute.org> to view the site.

Partnerships

The Beat the Odds Website Initiative has been a powerful catalyst in building a network of partnerships.

- **Schools – The Beat the Odds Partners Program**

The BTO Institute provides services through the School Partners Program. During FY 2008, the first year of the program, Beat the Odds provided training, assistance and support to principals in 27 schools located in 18 districts. During the FY 2009, with support from TRIF funding, BTO provided these services to 59 schools, more than double the number that received help the previous year. Through the program, experienced principals act as mentors to the partner principals and both participate in monthly leadership training seminars on key aspects of the BTO principles, receiving and sharing practical advice on topics such as data analysis and ongoing assessment, collaboration, high stakes testing and parent empowerment. The success of the program to date has led us to add 26 new schools for the coming school year, increasing the number of participating schools to a total of approximately 85 located in Phoenix, Tucson, and Whiteriver, Arizona. Each cohort is expected to continue for three years as participants work toward designation as a Beat the Odds School as measured by improvements in performance similar to the successful schools cited in the original study.

Partners interact with each other and with their mentors through the TRIF-funded website that serves as the online resource center for the project. The BTO Institute website is the communications infrastructure for the BTO Partners Program. Its password protected “Partners Only” section enables networking among the BTO Partners and supports peer mentoring and coaching, ongoing training, sharing of best practices and access to secure discussion boards, event calendars and content tailored to the needs of the BTO Partners. In FY 2009, technology on the website was expanded so that during the 2009-2010 school year, each Partner will complete a customized school self-evaluation survey, receive an on-demand graph analysis of survey results and develop an action plan that will include an electronic tracking system. At a later date, case studies, web-based conferencing and other functions required by users will be added.

Other Arizona schools are working to implement study findings on their own and are encouraged to use the website as a valuable resource. A BTO Handbook to support schools in this implementation has been completed and has been distributed to Partners in a pilot version.

The resource center also has public areas that include the Beat the Odds report with a Spanish translation of key segments, as well as information about the project and BTO Partner schools. “Ideas at Work,” a TRIF-funded instructional DVD about the Beat the Odds study and findings, was developed and is available on the website for use in seminars and other educational activities. During FY 2009 additional videos and news clips have been added to the Partners community portion of the website making them available for training teachers and other staff members at the schools.

- **Organizational Partners**

Numerous organizations are working with CFA to integrate BTO principles into their professional training programs and to support statewide implementation in Arizona schools. Program partners include Greater Phoenix Leadership, the Arizona Latino Research Enterprise and all major education associations. Under continuing discussion and development are partnership opportunities with Teach for America, the Pew Center for the States, WestEd, the Governor’s P-20 Council and Arizona’s three public universities. The website provides links to all partner organizations.

- **Funding**

The \$250K annual TRIF funds have enabled us to leverage other support for the BTO project at a rate of nearly 3:1. Funding partners include the Arizona Community Foundation (\$100K), Stardust Foundation (\$150K), the Salt River Pima Indian Community (\$450K), the University of Phoenix (\$500K over 3 years) and the Helios Foundation (\$66K) as well as a major gift from Rusty and Rosie Lyon (\$100K).

Collateral Activities

- As implementation of the TRIF project has proceeded, the Center has continued to actively disseminate the BTO findings. For example, in July the Beat the Odds keys to success and their application in the schools were featured on “Horizonte,” on Channel 8. In August, the Institute presented BTO principles and described the School Partners program to representatives from education agencies across the state at a meeting of AZLeads/Leaders for Learning and, in October, to representatives of 18 school districts at the Greater Phoenix Education Management Council. Also, in October, a keynote presentation and follow-up session on BTO were part of the Arizona Schools Administrators’ Fall Superintendency/High Ed Conference. Subsequent presentations were made to principals at an event sponsored by Teach for America, to members of the Southern Arizona Leadership Council in Tucson, to superintendents’ groups from Phoenix and Tucson and to Yuma County’s schools administrators and teachers at their annual Professional Development Day. Throughout the year, BTO was introduced and discussed through personal visits to more than 20 superintendents and district administrators in Phoenix and Tucson. In the spring, Channel 12 featured data-driven instruction at Gilliland Elementary, a BTO Partner school in Tempe.
- A comprehensive assessment and evaluation program has been developed and is in use for all activities related to Beat the Odds, including the website.
- Mentors, partners in BTO and their schools received special recognition in 2009. Two principals, one a partner and one a mentor, were selected as Exemplary Principals by the Rodell Charitable Foundation; and a mentor and a partner were honored when their schools were designated A+ as part of the Arizona Education Foundation’s Blue Ribbon competition. Two BTO mentors earned promotions from principal to assistant superintendent while another BTO mentor and two BTO principals moved to district office positions. Two schools

won Golden Bell Awards from the Arizona School Boards Association; two received neighborhood Block Watch Grants and one school, along with BTO and the Center, received the ICARECORPS Partnership Award.

Goals & Results

The mission of the Beat the Odds Institute and its online resource center is to improve “achievement per student” by working collaboratively with K-12, community college and university educators, and with policy makers and funders to embed BTO principles in Arizona’s K-12 schools and beyond.

Our goal is to increase the performance of our target group of students in reading and math so their academic performance compares favorably with the achievement of higher socio-economic students. Recently completed analyses of AIMS reading and math scores for participants in 2007-2008 indicate that some Partners have already shown encouraging evidence of improvement. A number of schools showed year-to-year improvements in reading and math that were significantly larger than their district’s improvement while 21% of schools showed a significantly larger improvement in AIMS math and reading scores compared to their previous year’s change in scores. An analysis of 2008-2009 state test results is currently underway.

To become a “Beat the Odds School” requires three years of sustained growth in AIMS test score data, as well as full implementation of the six Beat the Odds elements. As part of a multi-year improvement program, schools have the opportunity to earn recognition at several levels. This year, 16 schools achieved “bronze” status for effectively implementing the key elements as measured by the survey on the BTO interactive website and their achievement of at least a label of “performing” on AZ Learns as determined by the Arizona Department of Education. Data on AZ Learns that becomes available this fall will be utilized in determining which schools have met the requirements for achieving “silver” status, the next level of improvement.

Financial Information

Fiscal year ending June 30, 2009

	FY 2007 Actual	FY 2008 Actual	FY 2009 Budget	FY 2009 Actual
REVENUE				
Carry Forward	\$ 0	\$69,850	\$10,000	\$10,000
New TRIF Revenue	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000
TOTAL REVENUE	\$250,000	\$319,850	\$260,000	\$260,000
OPERATING BUDGET				
Personal Services	\$75,695	\$138,000	\$150,000	\$140,530
Outside Vendors	\$97,520	\$161,850	\$62,000	\$90,320
All Other Operating	\$6,935	\$10,000	\$8,000	\$775
Student Program			\$40,000	\$28,375
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$180,150	\$309,850	\$260,000	\$260,000

Indicative Results in FY 2009 (year 3)

1. **RETURN ON INVESTMENT:** Grants and gifts continued to leverage TRIF funds at the rate of 3:1 as funding was secured to expand the work of the Beat the Odds Institute in 2009. To further leverage TRIF funding, an agreement between the Center and the ASU School of Public Affairs provided two undergraduate students and one graduate student the opportunity to engage with the Center and the BTO Institute on the various projects highlighted in this report. The students made active use of the website and contributed to the development of materials that enhanced and expanded it. A School of Public Affairs faculty member served as a liaison between the students and the Center.
2. **KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER:** In addition to ongoing dissemination of the BTO study, 59 schools in Maricopa County signed formal agreements with the Institute to pursue designation as a Beat the Odds School, which requires schools to achieve performance criteria similar to those schools in the original study. That number will continue to grow in FY 2010 as the program implements additional expansion strategies in Maricopa County, the Tucson area and in Whiteriver.
3. **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:** With support from the Regents Innovation Fund, the Center continued to focus on embedding key concepts from the Beat the Odds study in Arizona schools. By building on the knowledge gained, the Center expanded its impact more broadly on education reform by collaboratively exploring new pathways to post secondary education with K-12 schools, community colleges and our state universities. Another example is the Center's partnership with Greater Phoenix Leadership and its partner organizations statewide that provides ongoing opportunities to connect BTO and other Center activities to the efforts of the business sector to achieve the skilled workforce Arizona needs for the future. The Center's work to date in developing the Beat the Odds online resource center provides the opportunity to extend this capacity to other strategically important State initiatives, such as the creation of a common vision for Arizona—"The Arizona We Want".
4. **EDUCATION OUTREACH:** The BTO website currently averages about 16,205 hits per month, indicating the extent to which the site enables useful outreach and communication. In addition to the numerous partnerships that have been developed with schools, foundations, professional associations and organizations committed to educational success for Arizona, the Institute has developed a BTO instructional video available online and on DVD. Links to all the partner organizations also are available on the website. Additionally the original study is available online, as is a Spanish translation of the key findings of the report. As well, a Handbook for BTO implementation has been developed as an additional expansion strategy to enable broader use of the Beat the Odds concepts by schools and districts throughout Arizona, and will be piloted on the website. The Institute will continue pursuing both "top-down" and "bottom-up" strategies during FY 2010 to expand the network of BTO partnerships and to develop linkages to other important Center initiatives.

Management

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Learn More

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