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[Home](#) > COMMENTARY: The Common Core advantage

## COMMENTARY: The Common Core advantage

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Common Core is a word you'll be seeing often this legislative session. The governor on Monday made clear her support for these rigorous academic standards during her State of the State Address and the Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry has made the implementation of the Common Core a top priority for 2013.

In fact, I had the pleasure on Wednesday of testifying at a special state House hearing of the Education, Higher Education and Commerce Committees. It was fantastic to get the committees that have a direct link to education and business together in the same room to talk about this important issue. Education Chair Doris Goodale, Higher Education Chair Jeff Dial and Commerce Chair Tom Forese deserve kudos for putting the hearing together and giving representatives from leading Arizona companies like SUMCO Phoenix Corp., Intel and Raytheon a chance to provide the committee members their thoughts on ensuring that Arizona's students are ready for higher education and the workplace.



Some may ask what we mean, exactly, when we talk about the Common Core. Nearly 20 years ago states started to embrace the idea of minimum standards and not just minimum course work. However, the standards for what students need to know to be qualified members of the workforce have historically not been up to par.

For multi-state companies and those who engage globally, inconsistent preparedness across states has hurt their competitiveness and ability to hire from within. This message gained steam from the American business community a decade ago and became a steady drum beat as industry after industry found that much of the labor pool was unprepared for the rigor of the modern workplace and unprepared for the training that would get them and keep them qualified.

Hearing and understanding this message, governors and state superintendents undertook the work to develop internationally benchmarked standards — well researched standards — that expressed what students need to know to survive and succeed in a complex world where change is constant and rapid. These standards don't just change what students know, but how they learn and process information.

The Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association partnered with industry and educators alike to ensure standards meant students would leave high school both work ready — prepared for entry-level employment — and college ready.

And so came to be the birth of Common Core, a set of standards that guides states and teachers in building curriculum that will prepare more of our country's students for today's jobs.

With the support of statewide business and industry, Arizona has voluntarily adopted these Common Core standards and will begin requiring their use next school year.

It's important to note that Common Core has not been handed down by the feds. While the U.S. Department of Education did offer states some financial incentives to bring the Common Core online, Arizona's development and use of Common Core was adopted prior to the current federal administration.

As U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said last year, "The idea that the Common Core standards are nationally-imposed is a conspiracy theory in search of a conspiracy. The Common Core academic standards were both developed and adopted by the states, and they

have widespread bipartisan support. GOP leaders like Jeb Bush and governors Mitch Daniels, Chris Christie, and Bill Haslam have supported the Common Core standards because they realize states must stop dumming down academic standards and lying about the performance of children and schools.” Getting our kids ready for tomorrow’s economy is a truly bipartisan issue.

Common Core will allow Arizona to prepare students to be lifelong learners who can adapt and learn new information and new systems in real time at the workplace, in venues for workforce training, and in college. These standards will ensure that information isn’t just memorized, but also deployed.

Teachers will now take their students deeper into the standards and challenge them to problem solve, analyze and apply new knowledge rather than simply memorize facts and dates. Prior standards were described as “a mile wide and an inch deep.” This shallow delivery hurt students once they entered the workplace.

Simply learning information is no longer good enough. Information must be used and knowledge demonstrated. Students who practice this ability in the classroom setting will bring immense value to their future workplace. Moving to Common Core will give Arizona a labor pool that will be equipped to respond quickly to advancements and expectations.

That’s good news for Arizona students and Arizona business.

**GLENN HAMER** is the president and CEO of the Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The organization is committed to advancing Arizona’s competitive position in the global economy by advocating free-market policies that stimulate economic growth and prosperity for all Arizonans. <http://www.azchamber.com/>.

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