



# ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**For Immediate Release**  
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**Contact: Julie Johnson Thompson**  
**(501) 683-4786 / (501) 766-7976**  
[julie.thompson@arkansas.gov](mailto:julie.thompson@arkansas.gov)

LITTLE ROCK: Governor Mike Beebe and Arkansas Commissioner of Education Ken James today joined the Common Core State Standards Initiative, a state-led process to develop common English-language arts and mathematics standards. The Common Core State Standards Initiative will be jointly led by the NGA Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

In addition to Arkansas the following states and territories have also signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA): Alabama; Arizona; California; Colorado; Connecticut; Delaware; District of Columbia; Florida; Georgia; Hawaii; Idaho; Illinois; Indiana; Iowa; Kansas; Kentucky; Louisiana; Maine; Maryland; Massachusetts; Michigan; Minnesota; Mississippi; Montana; Nebraska; Nevada; New Hampshire; New Jersey; New Mexico; New York; North Carolina; North Dakota; Ohio; Oklahoma; Oregon; Pennsylvania; Puerto Rico; Rhode Island; South Dakota; Tennessee; Utah; Vermont; Virgin Islands; Virginia; Washington; West Virginia; Wisconsin; Wyoming.

In the twenty-six years since the release of *A Nation at Risk*, states have made great strides in increasing the academic rigor of education standards. Yet, America's children still remain behind other nations in terms of academic achievement and preparedness to succeed.

By signing this MOA, Governor Beebe, Dr. James and their colleagues across the country in commit to a state-led process to develop a common core of state standards in English-language arts and mathematics for grades K-12. These standards will be research and evidence-based, internationally benchmarked, aligned with college and work expectations and include rigorous content and skills.

"I appreciate Gov. Beebe's strong support of this initiative," Dr. James said. "Because of his leadership and focus on education, our state has been at the forefront of this movement, which will undoubtedly accelerate the academic and economic success of our state as well as our nation."

The Common Core State Standards Initiative will build directly on recent efforts of leading organizations and states that have focused on developing college-and

career-ready standards and ensure that these standards can be internationally benchmarked to top-performing countries around the world. The goal is to have a common core of state standards that states can voluntarily adopt. States may choose to include additional standards beyond the common core as long as the common core represents at least 85 percent of the state's standards in English language arts and mathematics. The second phase of this initiative is to ultimately develop common assessments aligned to the core standards developed through the process.

“Because Arkansas has worked in recent years to align the rigor of our state's mathematics and English language arts standards with college- and career-ready requirements, we will be well-positioned to implement the common core state standards,” Dr. James said. “Even so, we know that the common core effort will produce standards that are rigorous, clearly stated, and fewer in number than what we presently teach so that Arkansas' teachers will be able to spend the time to teach concepts and applications at the necessary depth for high-level learning.”

The NGA Center and CCSSO will coordinate the process to develop these standards and will create an expert validation committee to provide an independent review of the common core state standards, as well as the grade-by-grade standards. This committee will be composed of nationally and internationally recognized and trusted education experts who are neutral to – and independent of – the process. The college- and career-ready standards are expected to be completed in July 2009. The grade-by-grade standards work is expected to be completed in December 2009.

***The Arkansas Department of Education strives to ensure that all children in the state have access to a quality education by providing educators, administrators and staff with leadership, resources and training.***