

ARKANSAS Governor Mike Beebe



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GOVERNOR BEEBE'S WEEKLY COLUMN AND RADIO ADDRESS: KEEPING PACE WITH GLOBAL COMPETITION

LITTLE ROCK - Governor Beebe's weekly radio address can be found online in MP3 format and downloadable for radio use at [this page](#).

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The United States is a country built by exceptional achievements and a drive to always set the bar higher. However, in recent years, our national education system has not met those standards. The latest international educational survey was released late last year by the Program for International School Assessment. While at one time, we were consistently at or near the top of this survey, America now ranks 20th in reading, 23rd in science and 30th in math. We are not falling back as much as we are standing still, with more and more countries racing ahead of us. In a modern world with a technologically advanced economy, these results are unacceptable.

This is why, in 2008, states began working together to improve standards in our schools. We decided that we could not wait for or depend on the federal government to develop reforms to better prepare our students. Through the National Governor's Association and other national educational organizations, we developed K-12 standards based on research and evidence. We would build benchmarks with international competition, college preparation and workforce needs in mind. Out of these criteria came the Common Core State Standards.

Common Core elevates the standards for knowledge students should have learned as they progress through their education. What it does not do is tell teachers and school districts how to teach material and develop curricula. That is still done with local control at the

local level. Around the country, this has created some mixed results with the initial launch. Some districts are better preparing their administrators and teachers than others, and in some cases, teachers and parents have become frustrated as a result.

While only time will tell how effectively these new standards can be implemented, the rollout is being hindered by intentionally spreading fear and misinformation about Common Core. Some claim that it is a federal mandate being imposed upon states and schools, an attempt by the federal government to dictate what and how our children learn. This is the exact opposite of the truth. Common Core was developed outside of federal oversight. It was an initiative brought by state leaders nationwide who wanted to reinvent our education system for a return to international prominence.

And it's not just state-government and educational leaders who want to see Common Core succeed; it's our students' future mentors and employers: the business community. We've seen a recent swell in efforts to bring jobs back to America from overseas, both for financial and patriotic reasons. But with other countries turning out better-educated graduates, we see another hurdle interfering with those efforts.

That's why the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce and business groups throughout the 40+ states implementing Common Core are rallying support from employers. They know that we need stronger standards to maintain American education and continue producing graduates who can keep our workforce competitive and innovative.

Change and reform are never simple and can result in difficult adjustments and misinformation. In the case of the Common Core State Standards, however, exhaustive efforts and research have resulted in progress by state leaders who want to see our students and schools excel. This is putting our best foot forward to improve the outcome of our investments in education, and to keep America competitive in the global economy.

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