

Remarks by Tom Horne, Superintendent of Public Instruction  
January 4, 2007

Though my remarks will only take a moment, I hope you will vividly remember what I am about to say.

Arizona students perform above the national average. I am going to repeat that, because it surprises many people. Arizona students perform above the national average.

Today, I want to give praise to our unsung heroes – our Arizona educators.

Over 600,000 Arizona students take the Terra Nova test every year. This national test is the principal means by which we can compare the knowledge and skills of Arizona students with students throughout the rest of the country. On the Terra Nova test, Arizona students perform above the national average.

In the Scholastic Aptitude Test, Arizona students perform above the national average.

In the ACT college entrance exam, Arizona students perform above the national average.

There has been confusion on this point in the public mind because studies that measure what we spend per pupil, as opposed to what the students learn, find that Arizona is last. *Education Week*, an objective party, that has no reason to favor or disfavor Arizona relative to other states, ranks Arizona 50<sup>th</sup> in what we spend per pupil.

So, I think it is a tribute to Arizona teachers and principals, as well as Arizona's focus on rigorous state standards and a strong accountability system, that, although we are 50<sup>th</sup> in the country in what we spend, Arizona students are above the national average in what they learn. If we can raise the priority of K-12 education in our budget, and spend close to the national average, I have no doubt that Arizona could be in the top ten states in what the students learn.

Similarly, with our graduation rate, we measure our graduation rate by the formula adopted by the National Governors Association: the number of students in 9<sup>th</sup> grade as the denominator and the number of students who graduate is the numerator. At 70 percent, Arizona is about at the national average in all three national comparison studies. It is far above some of the comparison states, such as Texas – 66.8 percent; New Mexico – 56.7 percent and Florida – 57.5 percent compared to Arizona's 70 percent.

We will be working hard to continue to raise standards, emphasize academic rigor in the classroom, and increase student learning in Arizona. But in the meantime, let us pay tribute to Arizona educators, and spread the word: Despite our need to increase our resources, Arizona schools are producing students who perform above the national average in their test scores.

Thank you very much.