

# OPINIONS

## AIMS gets students working

In a July 24 editorial, *The Arizona Republic* called for eliminating the requirement that students pass AIMS to graduate, and for creating a two-tiered diploma ("Think diplomas").

There would be a diploma for those who pass AIMS and a diploma for those who don't. *The Republic* is correct that we need to motivate students to excel and not just meet the minimal standards of the AIMS test. I have worked hard to do that, including scholarships for those who exceed three AIMS tests. But if we dump the requirement that students meet the minimal standards of the AIMS test to graduate, the pursuit of excellence will have lost a major war to the forces of mediocrity. It is my belief that *The Republic* does not want that result.

**Tom Horne**



As my first witness, I call Susan Edwards, an English teacher, who testifies that when AIMS became a graduation requirement, the students were waiting for her when she got to school at 7 a.m. seeking help with their writing, because they knew they would have to pass the writing test to graduate. Before that, she kept begging them to care, with little success.

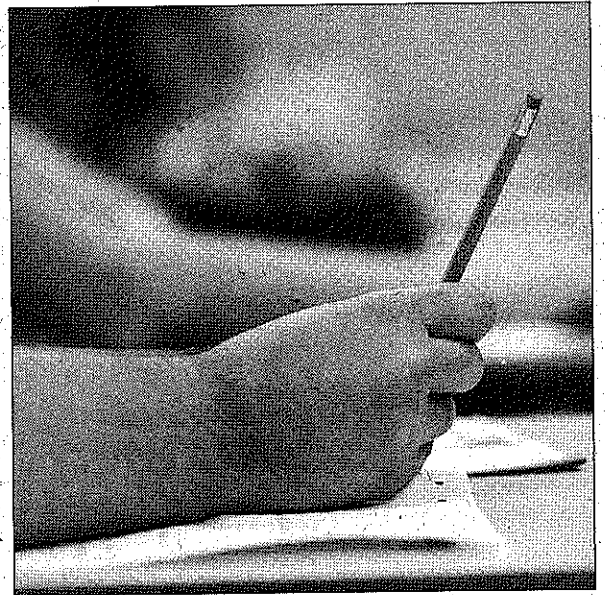
I received calls from all over the state, from principals and teachers, saying high-school students have never worked so hard, and even parents who were not involved with older siblings were now involved because they knew that their children had to pass the AIMS test.

A principal in Tucson told me: "Now, when the bell rings, the students are in their seats. I wasn't used to that."

Before AIMS became a graduation requirement, only schools and teachers were accountable for the results of the AIMS test. Teachers begged the students to do their best. Students said "Why should I?" The students had leverage over the teachers, rather than vice versa.

The public reacted because students received diplomas without having the knowledge and skills expected of a high-school graduate.

In the international test of science (TIMSS) the United States was sixth out of 25 countries in fourth grade, but dead last in high school. If the problem were the schools, we would not have done so well in fourth



SHERRIE BUZBY/THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Sophomore students at Horizon Honors High School in Ahwatukee take the math portion of the AIMS test.

grade. I believe the problem is that, as they get older, American students discover that they can blow off school and get away with it, which is not true in any other developed country. Motivation is key, and the AIMS graduation requirement has been an important motivator.

When permissive parents of students who have blown off their schoolwork, come and whine to legislators that their little darlings cannot pass the AIMS test, the legislators should respond that they need to study more.

If we dump the AIMS graduation requirement, and adopt a two-tiered diploma, the students who have historically done well will do what is needed to get the top-tier diploma, and the students who have historically done badly will settle for the second-tier diploma. The consequences for society would be disastrous.

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and out of them will pick up any E. coli and parasites. I find it hard to believe that the board of health allows pool diapers to be worn in the pools.

I believe that the wearing of diapers in the pools should be brought up as a health issue.

To me it is obvious that this would be a health hazard.

— Frank Cavanaugh, *Surprise*