



## Dept. Of Education To Host High School Summit

By Tom Horne

I have seen, many times on CSPAN, congressmen and senators asking Alan Greenspan about the export of American jobs. Each time, he gives the same answer: If we solve the education problem, everything will fall into place. If we don't solve the education problem, then nothing else that we do will matter.

To the surprise of many people, the standard international comparison of student achievement in mathematics and science (known as "TIMMS") shows that 4th grade U.S. students rank 4th of 17 countries. It is in 12th grade where U.S. students fell to the bottom (18th of 21).

Vastly increasing the amount that American students learn in high school is vital to the future of this country. We have made it an appropriately high priority in the Arizona Department of Education (ADE).

The ADE has attracted national attention as a model for a grassroots assessment of what matters most to our stakeholders. In October, 2004, the ADE, traversed the state to hold "Focus Group" sessions with parents, educators, students, community and business representatives. *Concerning high school education: what matters most to you; what are your expectations for student performance within the school and broader community; what do students need in order to be successful in school; what should students be prepared to do after graduation?* The results of these Focus Groups were used shape the ADE statewide action plan for high school renewal.

These grassroots efforts attracted the following national attention: (1) I was chosen to present the Arizona initiative to the U.S. Department of Education leadership conference in Washington, D.C.; (2) the Arizona initiative will be the focus of an article to appear in the next issue of *High School Redesign Monthly*. *The ADE High School Renewal and Improvement Initiative that resulted from these grassroots discussions is closely aligned to six of my priorities: assuring content-based curricula which includes career and technical education as well as the arts and social studies, using data-driven decision making to improve student achievement, strengthening high school literacy, increasing high school rigor, developing strong intervention programs, disseminating and recognizing successful secondary school practices and models.*

*The ADE is hosting three high school renewal summits, reflective of Breaking Ranks II, a national high school reform agenda, based upon research conducted by Brown University. The first summit will be Sept. 11-12 in Phoenix, addressing curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The new AIMS tutoring guides individualized to what questions each student got wrong on the AIMS test, will be showcased as a tool to help students who have not passed the test. Interested parties are encouraged to register on the [www.ade.az.gov](http://www.ade.az.gov) site, as well as to obtain information on the high school renewal initiative.*

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