

September 12, 2013

The Honorable Bill Haslam
Office of the Governor
1st Floor, State Capitol
Nashville, TN 37243

Commissioner Kevin Huffman
Department of Education
710 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Governor Haslam and Commissioner Huffman:

As education leaders in Tennessee, we believe our state is facing a historic opportunity. For the first time in many years, Tennessee is poised to catch up with and surpass other states in terms of K-12 student outcomes and become the fastest improving state in the country. We have made important gains in the last few years to improve public education. Our efforts as a state are paying off for students as more graduate each year from high school with the skills needed to succeed in the workforce and postsecondary education.

Most importantly, our students are increasingly more likely to be on a level playing field with students in other states. In 2007 the U.S. Chamber of Commerce gave Tennessee an “F” in “Truth in Advertising,” an alarming recognition that our expectations for students were too low. One of the foundational pieces of Tennessee’s efforts since then has been to raise academic standards for every student, in every grade - from Mountain City to Memphis.

We take the work to prepare students for a successful future very seriously, which is why we write to you today to express our strong and vocal support for the continued implementation of Tennessee’s Common Core State Standards.

As you know, the Common Core State Standards are rigorous academic expectations designed to provide students with the real world skills they need to be successful in life. Critical thinking, problem solving, and strong writing skills are essential skills that Tennessee’s Common Core helps to provide our students. These are the very skills that will prepare them for education beyond high school and for jobs that lead to the careers of today and tomorrow.

There is work to do before every student in our state graduates from high school prepared for their future. There is also more that can be done to support educators and parents through the implementation of Tennessee’s Common Core State Standards. This work will be challenging, but we owe it to the children we serve to continue moving forward by raising the bar in the classroom.

Thank you for your continued focus on improving student achievement in our state and for the high expectations you have for Tennessee students.

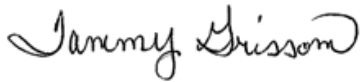
Sincerely,



Wayne Miller
Executive Director, Tennessee Organization
of School Superintendents



JC Bowman, PhD
Executive Director, Professional Educators
of Tennessee



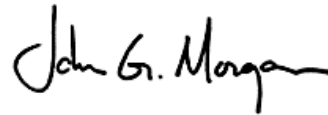
Dr. Tammy Grissom
Executive Director, Tennessee School
Boards Association



Charla Sparks
President, Tennessee PTA



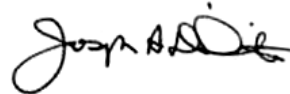
Dr. Gary Nixon
Executive Director, Tennessee State Board
of Education



John G. Morgan
Chancellor, Tennessee Board of Regents



Ernest P. Bentley, Jr.,
Executive Director, Tennessee Principals
Association



Joseph A. DiPietro
President, The University of Tennessee
System



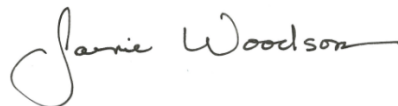
Gera Summerford
President, Tennessee Education Association



Dr. Claude Pressnell, Jr.
President, Tennessee Independent Colleges
and Universities Association



Dr. Richard Rhoda
Executive Director, Tennessee Higher
Education Commission



Jamie Woodson
President and CEO, SCORE

cc: Lieutenant Governor Ron Ramsey
Speaker of the House Beth Harwell
Senate Education Chair Dolores Gresham
House Education Chair Harry Brooks
Senate Education Committee
House Education Committee
Senate Finance Chair Randy McNally
House Finance Chair Charles Sargent
Speaker Pro Tempore Bo Watson
Speaker Pro Tempore Curtis Johnson
Leader Mark Norris
Leader Jim Kyle
Leader Gerald McCormick
Leader Craig Fitzhugh
Caucus Chairman Bill Ketron
Caucus Chairman Lowe Finney
Caucus Chairman Glen Casada
Caucus Chairman Mike Turner