



September 20, 2016

To: Members of the Arizona Standards Development Committee

MISSION: READINESS, the organization of more than 650 retired admirals and generals, including nine in Arizona, appreciates the opportunity to comment on your committee's draft of updated English language arts and math standards for grades K-12. We applaud the thorough and comprehensive review process undertaken by your committee and the State Board of Education.

The members of MISSION: READINESS support rigorous and consistent academic standards, as well as appropriate assessments of student progress. While leaving the specific analysis of the draft standards to educators and academic experts, MISSION: READINESS wants to guarantee that the bar remains high. The retired military leaders' concerns about the education system and student outcomes stem from the fact that roughly 71 percent of 17- to 24-year-olds are ineligible to serve in the military due to issues related to poor educational achievement, physical fitness, and a record of crime or drug abuse. The senior military leaders of MISSION: READINESS believe that such a high military ineligibility rate threatens military preparedness and jeopardizes our national security.

One in five students fail the military entrance exam, and rigorous education standards in particular help to provide children with the critical thinking skills necessary to pass. It is standard operating procedure in the military, and among other sectors of society, such as successful businesses and sports teams, to have concrete measures of performance. Consistency in these standards and assessments give schools, districts, and states a clear sense of student achievement based on clearly defined benchmarks and adequate measurements of learning.

Consistent standards are also critical for children from military families whose parents' assignments require them to move between multiple states during their K-12 years. These children are significantly disadvantaged when the academic standards to which they are held accountable change, often dramatically, as they move state to state. Without enough educated young men and women available to serve in tomorrow's Armed Services, our country cannot maintain the capabilities necessary to ensuring our national security. More broadly, the retired generals and admirals of MISSION: READINESS recognize that rigorous standards provide students the opportunity to acquire the education they need and deserve



in order to be ready for higher education and employment, ultimately leading them toward a path of being productive and contributing Americans.

We ask you to make sure that these revisions, as well as any others that move forward, safeguard consistency and rigor, provide clear and coherent progression from one grade to the next, set clear expectations, and prioritize the most critical skills that students need to succeed. The focus and diligence shown by teachers during the initial review gives us confidence this can be achieved.

We commend the Arizona Standards Development Committee for executing a thorough review process and maintaining high standards in math and English language arts.

Very respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Dawson Taggart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Amy Dawson Taggart  
National Director  
MISSION: READINESS