

RALEIGH, NC, September 19, 2013 **/24-7PressRelease/** -- Raleigh business leaders today called for continued support of North Carolina Common Core State Standards and aligned assessments to address the state's current and predicted "skills gaps"—a staggering 46,000 workers in the coming years. Citing a new America's Edge report, the business leaders described how, if current education and labor trends continue, there will be a sizeable gap between the number of workers able to fill jobs that require certain skills and/or post-secondary education and the number of residents who will be prepared to fill them.

Business leaders participating in the release of the America's Edge report included Ann Goodnight, Director, Community Relations, SAS Institute Inc.; Steve Parrott, President, Wake Education Partnership; Billie Redmond, CEO, TradeMark Properties; Harvey Schmitt, President & CEO, Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce; and Eric Guckian, Senior Advisor on Education, Office of the Governor.

The business leaders called for increased access to innovative education models that, in conjunction with the rigorous standards, will prepare students with the skills now required in a global market.

North Carolina Common Core State Standards and Assessments

The business leaders urged the state to continue implementation of college- and career-ready standards—the North Carolina Common Core State Standards—and assessments aligned to those standards.

"We must invest in what will keep businesses in our state, keep and attract educated and skilled workers, and move us forward with innovation and technology. A quality K-12 system is key to achieving those goals," Goodnight stated.

Business leaders were among the initial voices to call for the standards because, as the America's Edge members emphasized, the standards target the same skills as those needed for success in the workplace.

"We from the business community fully support the North Carolina Common Core State Standards. Why? Because they were expressly designed to develop skills for real jobs in a

modern economy," Redmond said.

With the upcoming release of scores from the first batch of assessments aligned to the new standards, the business leaders urged North Carolina to stay the course instead of abandoning or condemning the standards.

"The North Carolina Common Core State Standards and aligned assessments are critical to getting our students college- and career-ready - prepared to enter and succeed in our state's workforce," Parrott stated.

Added Guckian, "We must continue to strengthen North Carolina's education system and that is why Governor McCrory supports our Common Core State Standards, which were expressly designed to better ensure our students develop the skills needed to compete successfully in a global economy."

The business leaders attest that although the scores may look different than they have in the past, the standards will help ensure that students graduate high school fully prepared for college and careers—a needed improvement from the current rates indicating that only 17 percent of 2013 graduates met college readiness benchmarks in all four core areas tested in ACT college admissions tests.

"North Carolina is a leader among states in education quality and reform in many ways. We need to ensure that our leadership continues," said Schmitt.

Innovative High School Education Models

To further address the "skills gap," the business leaders pointed to innovative high school education models that help students stay engaged in school so they graduate with a concrete understanding of what they need for post-secondary and workplace success. Innovative education models incorporate work-based learning, such as internships that deepen students' understanding of how academics relate to careers; project-based learning, which develops collaborative skills; and significant communications skills, a "soft skill" often lacking in younger

workers.

High school models that integrate rigorous academics and career-relevant instruction are having a proven impact on student achievement and workforce development. A study of one model of innovative high school education models, called "Career Academies," showed students were twice as likely as non-participants to be working in the computer, engineering or media technology sector eight years after graduation, and earned more and were more productive than those not in the program.

The business leaders urged policy-makers to increase access to these education models so students develop crucial skills for a world-class competitive workforce.