

COMMENTARY

The California Diploma Project

A Big Step Forward

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For the past year or so, PACE has been the home of the [California Diploma Project](#), which brings together eight signatories representing the multiple segments of California's fragmented education system to work on strengthening alignment and coherence across levels and institutions. In April, the signatories endorsed a statement recognizing satisfactory performance on the augmented [11th grade CST](#) that is part of the [Early Assessment Program](#) as a common indicator of readiness for non-remedial, credit-bearing baccalaureate-level work in all of California's colleges and universities.

This is a big step forward. For the first time, students have a clear target as they seek to prepare themselves for success in college, and the state's colleges and universities have a fixed point against which to benchmark their highly diverse assessment and placement systems. The critical problem, of course, is that the performance of most California students falls far short of the EAP standard.

In 2009, for example, only 12 percent of California's 11th graders were deemed "ready for college" in English according to the EAP standard. Only 5 percent were deemed "ready" in Mathematics, with an additional 15 percent "conditionally ready" if they were to complete an additional math course in their senior year. Increasing these numbers won't be easy, but agreement on a common indicator of what it means to be ready for college level coursework offers real leverage on the problem.

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