

COMMENTARY

Common Core Standards and California's Digital Future

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As [California begins to move toward implementation of common core standards](#) one key issue is how the rollout of new standards will intersect with the rapidly expanding use of digital technologies in the education system. Should California continue to provide printed textbooks for students, or should the state move instead to support teachers' and students' access to online instructional materials? The question may be obvious, but the answer is not.

There are practical issues related to the availability of materials and the alignment of existing materials to the common core standards. Some materials are open-source, while others are proprietary, and materials from different sources do not always work well together. In addition, a move toward the adoption of online instructional materials will face statutory obstacles that originate in the rules governing textbook adoption, and legal obstacles based on [the Williams settlement requirements that all students have equal access to textbooks](#). Navigating through these issues will require great skill and an unusual level of cooperation among the multiple stakeholders involved with education issues. And, sad to say, the move to online instructional materials is a simple matter when compared with the host of even more complicated questions that quickly present themselves.

Do state regulations on class size and seat time make sense in a world where students have non-stop access to on-line materials? Will current employment arrangements allow us to make expert teaching available to students in multiple classrooms, schools, and school districts? Can we ensure that new technologies make the distribution of educational opportunities fairer, rather than less fair?

All of these questions and more will inevitably arise as we begin the work of implementing new standards, and it's time to begin thinking about them now. Moving quickly in an unsettled technological and policy environment carries real risks, but reflexive loyalty to familiar tools and routines in a moment of rapid and potentially radical change is likely to handicap California students for years to come.

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