

COMMENTARY

Advice to Our New Governor

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Let's get assessment policy right.

California has recently adopted new standards for what children should know and be able to do at every grade level. To ensure that these new standards support improvement in the performance of schools and students, tie them to assessments that provide timely, accurate, and useful information for teachers and parents about whether and how students are progressing toward mastery.

Two national assessment consortia funded by the federal government will do some of the work, but most of it will have to be done in California. Key tasks include the development of a computer-adaptive system that can measure the knowledge and skill of English-language learners, and not just their fluency in English; the construction of instruments to assess students' performance in middle-school mathematics (where California standards are very different from the common core); and the incorporation of complex performance tasks including extended writing into the assessment system at all levels.

The STAR system sunsets in 2013, and national assessments are scheduled to come on-line in 2014, so we have a brief opportunity to get this right, right now. Seize the moment.

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