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Key Requirements of Race to the Top Grants: Standards and Assessments

LEGISLATIVE ANALYST'S OFFICE

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Assembly Education Committee
Hon. Julia Brownley, Chair





Race to the Top (RTTT) Has Significant Requirements Relating to Academic Standards and Assessments

- ☒ The RTTT initiative includes two grants related to standards and assessments.
 - State Incentive Grants (\$4 billion nationwide).
 - RTTT Assessment Grants (\$350 million nationwide).

- ☒ Three major criteria relate directly to standards and assessments.
 - Develop and adopt common standards.
 - Develop and implement common assessments.
 - Develop a plan for supporting teachers as they transition to common standards and assessments.

- ☒ The RTTT requirements have potential benefits by allowing states to:
 - Track individual student progress over time.
 - Use student progress to inform teacher evaluation and professional development.
 - Identify schools not meeting accountability benchmarks but still making significant progress.
 - Compare academic performance across states.



Developing and Adopting Common Standards

- ☒ The RTTT criteria call for a Memorandum of Understanding documenting that the state is participating in a consortium to develop common standards.
- ☒ States will be judged on the number of states participating and whether standards are internationally benchmarked.
- ☒ Consortium must be committed to adopting common standards by June 2010.



California in Good Position to Meet Requirements Relating to Standards, But Challenges Remain



California is already close to meeting the standards criteria:

- Even prior to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, California had rigorous academic standards in place.
- In June 2009, California joined the Common Core State Standards Initiative, which is organized by the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. Through the initiative, 48 states have committed to developing a timeline for adoption of shared state math and Language Arts standards by early 2010.

Timeline for Common Core State Standards Initiative

Timeline	Process
Summer 2009	Draft college and career readiness standards released.
Fall 2009	College and career readiness standards validated by independent committee of experts.
Early Winter 2010	Language Arts and math standards released publicly.
Late Winter 2010	States submit individual timelines for adoption of at least 85 percent of common standards.
Summer 2010	Race to the Top deadline for adopting K-12 standards.



Despite progress, challenges remain for California:

- State will likely need to replace majority of current Language Arts and math standards with common standards.
- Given the quality of California's current standards, state will need to ensure common standards are not less rigorous.



Developing and Implementing Common Assessments

- ☒ The RTTT assessment criteria call for a statement of intent to join a consortium of states developing common assessments.
- ☒ States will be judged on the number of states participating and whether assessments are aligned to common standards.
- ☒ The RTTT initiative provides no specific timeline for the adoption of common assessments.
- ☒ To be competitive, states also must apply for the RTTT Assessment Grant.



California is Competitive on Requirements Relating to Assessments, but Significant Obstacles Remain

- ☑ California has made progress towards meeting requirements by joining the common standards initiative and having standards-aligned assessments already in place.
- ☑ California still faces significant hurdles:
 - Current state assessments are not structured to measure individual student growth reliably.
 - Developing assessments shared by states can be even more technically complicated than developing common standards.
 - Long-term adoption of common standards and assessments would create implementation challenges for state educators.