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New Law Would Broaden Expectations of Schools Beyond Standardized Tests

Sacramento: A bill coming up for a vote in the California Assembly would provide a way to measure and inspire opportunities for creativity and innovation in public schools.

The Index of Creative and Innovative Education (CIE), SB 789, authored by Senator Curren Price and sponsored by the California Alliance for Arts Education would establish a new metric to measure activities and practices that teach, encourage and foster creativity in students.

"As educators, parents and students we know there is more to academic success than bubble tests," according to Joe Landon, Executive Director of the California Alliance for Arts Education, "We need to encourage practices that help our kids to problem-solve, think critically and innovate. This index should be part of the state's accountability system."

SB 789 (Price) proposes that the Public Schools Accountability Act Advisory Committee create a voluntary "Creative and Innovative Education Index" that would collect information about the school as a whole, particularly with regard to courses and after-school clubs and activities such as debate clubs, science fairs, or arts education that can help students develop creative and innovative approaches to problem solving.

The scores of individual schools and districts would be published, establishing incentives for schools to promote an overall environment that fosters creativity and innovation.

"As we have moved into an economy driven by ideas and innovation, our schools must respond by providing all our students with the opportunity to develop creative skills," said Senator Curren Price, the author of the bill.

At present, schools are measured by the Academic Performance Index (API), which reflects student performance on standardized tests. These scores carry high stakes for funding, giving schools an incentive to to “teach to the test” and reduce resources for other subject areas.

There is growing recognition that our state’s economy will be driven by ideas and innovation. According to a coalition of researchers, 81% of American corporate leaders say that “creativity is an essential skill for the 21st century work force.”

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