

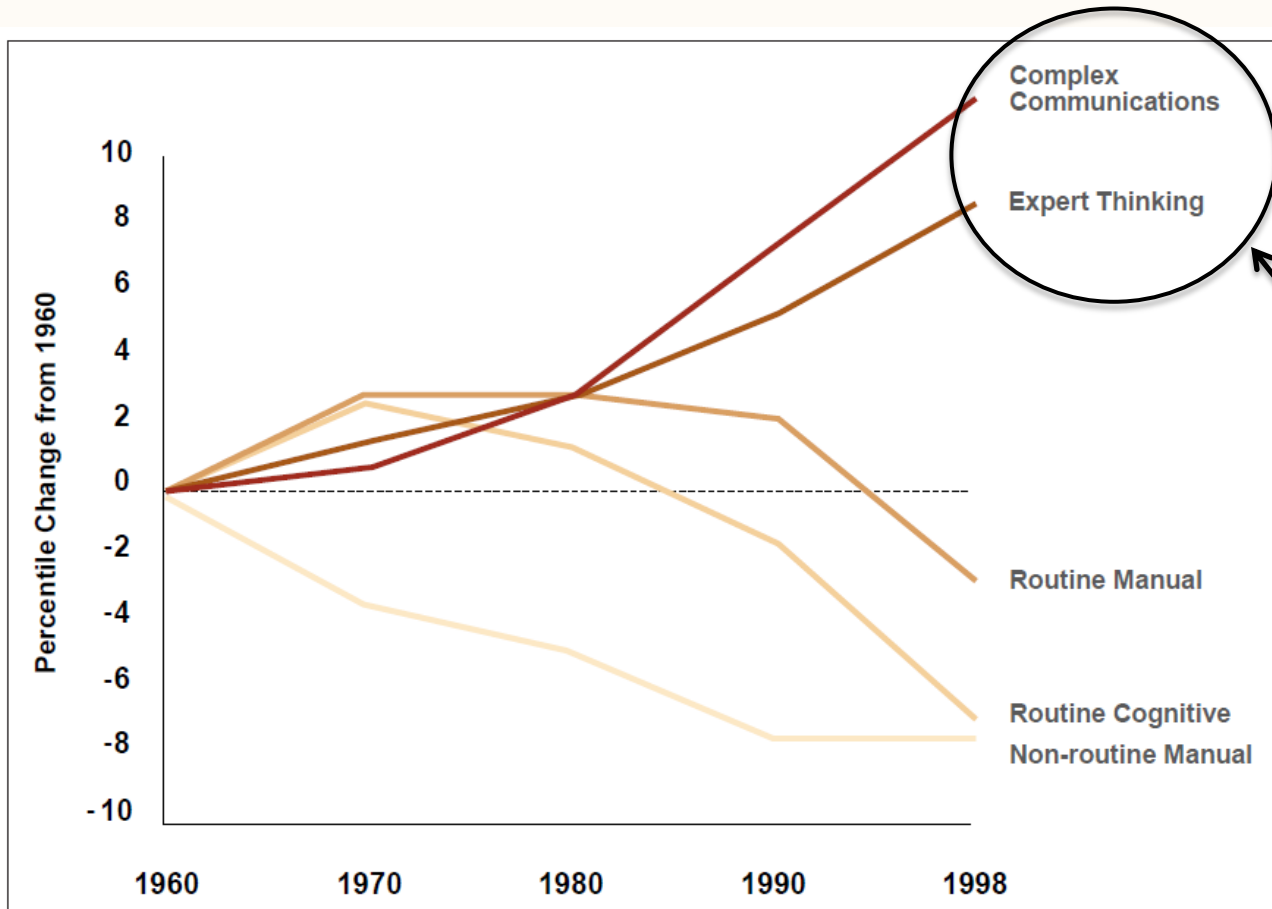


Webinar: Alliance for Effective Education
March 27, 2013

Developing Assessments of Deeper Learning: The Costs & Benefits of Tests that Help Students Learn

HIGH-QUALITY ASSESSMENTS ARE
NEEDED TO EVALUATE THE SKILLS
REQUIRED BY TODAY'S SOCIETY

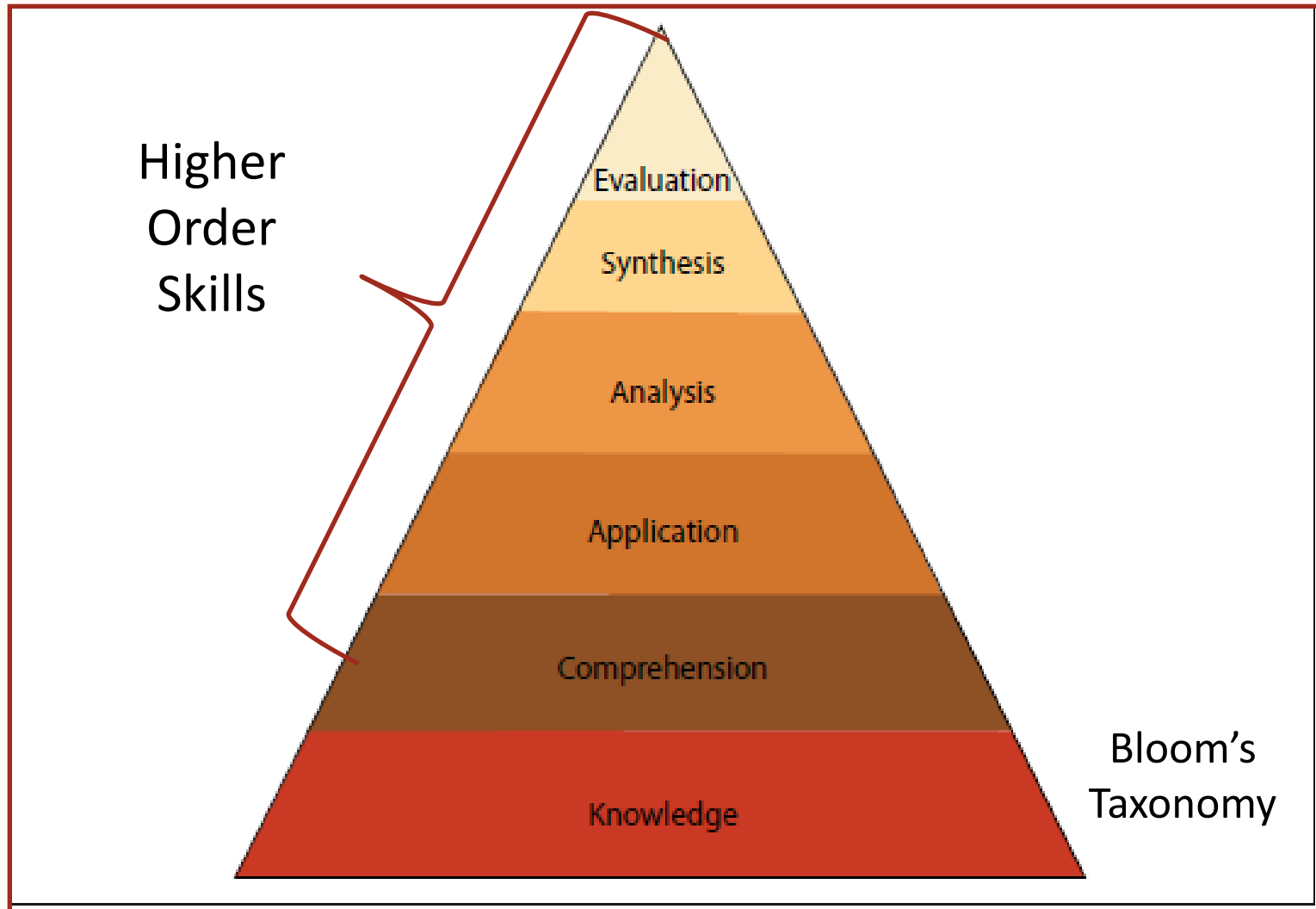
The Changing Demand for Job Skills



Source: Murnane & Levy (1996)

“Deeper learning”

Higher Order Skills Are Needed



But U.S. Tests Focus on Lower-Level Skills



- Since NCLB, tests have become mostly multiple-choice. States phased out performance assessments.
- New RAND study of 17 states' tests: Only 2% of math items and 21% of ELA items assess higher-order skills.

Other Nations are Transforming Curriculum and Assessments

Finland, Singapore, New Zealand, Hong Kong, the UK, Australia, and others assess deeper learning through:

- Tests that use open-ended essays and problems to be solved and explained
- Performance tasks that require students to design and conduct investigations, collect data, analyze and present findings in writing, orally, and with technology

Research finds that these assessments:

- Can be scored reliably by teachers with moderation and auditing systems
- Enable teachers to learn about the standards, curriculum, and teaching
- Support more rigorous instruction and more intensive learning



Change Is on the Horizon

- Common Core State Standards: More attention to deeper learning
- SBAC and PARCC: States coming together to develop next generation assessments
- Some states are re-introducing performance assessments

New Assessments Tap Deeper Learning

SBAC Sixth-Grade Task: Planning a Field Trip

Classroom Activity: The teacher introduces the topic and activates students' prior knowledge of planning field trips by:

- 1) Leading students in a whole-class discussion about where they have previously been on field trips or other outings with their school, youth group, or family.
- 2) Creating a chart showing the class's preferences by having students first list and then vote on the places they would most like to go on a field trip, followed by whole-class discussion about the top choices.

Student Task: Individual students:

- 1) Recommend where the class should go on a field trip based on their analysis of the class vote.
- 2) Determine the per-student cost of going on a field trip to three different locations, based on a chart showing the distance and entrance fees for each option, plus a formula for bus charges.
- 3) Use information from the cost chart to evaluate a hypothetical recommendation about going to the zoo.
- 4) Write a note to their teacher recommending and justifying which field trip the class should take based on an analysis of all available information.

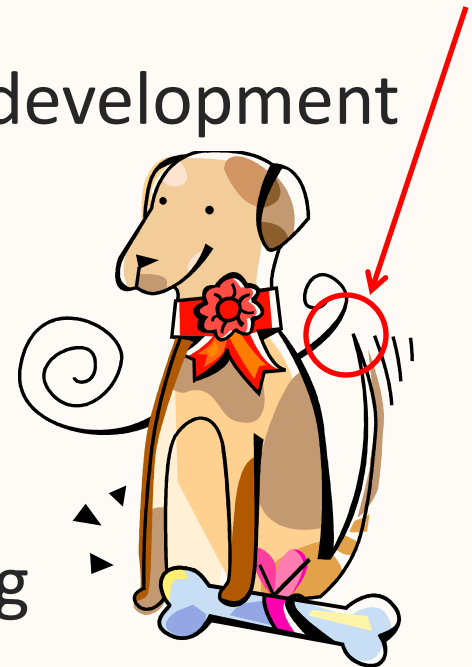
CAN HIGH-QUALITY ASSESSMENTS BECOME FEASIBLE AND AFFORDABLE?

Evaluating Costs and Benefits

- Because of NCLB requirements for “every child, every year” testing, states have looked for inexpensive tests
- On average states spend \$25 per pupil for NCLB-required ELA and math tests [$< \frac{1}{2}$ of 1% of education spending]
- However, the range is from about \$10 to over \$100 per pupil

There Are also hidden costs

- Other state and local costs add to the total:
 - Interim & benchmark tests
 - Data systems
 - Test preparation materials
 - Scoring, analysis, and teacher development costs
- With state test costs, these total > \$50 per pupil on average
- But because they are focused on the same low-level tests, these costs don't support deeper learning



And there Are costs to instruction

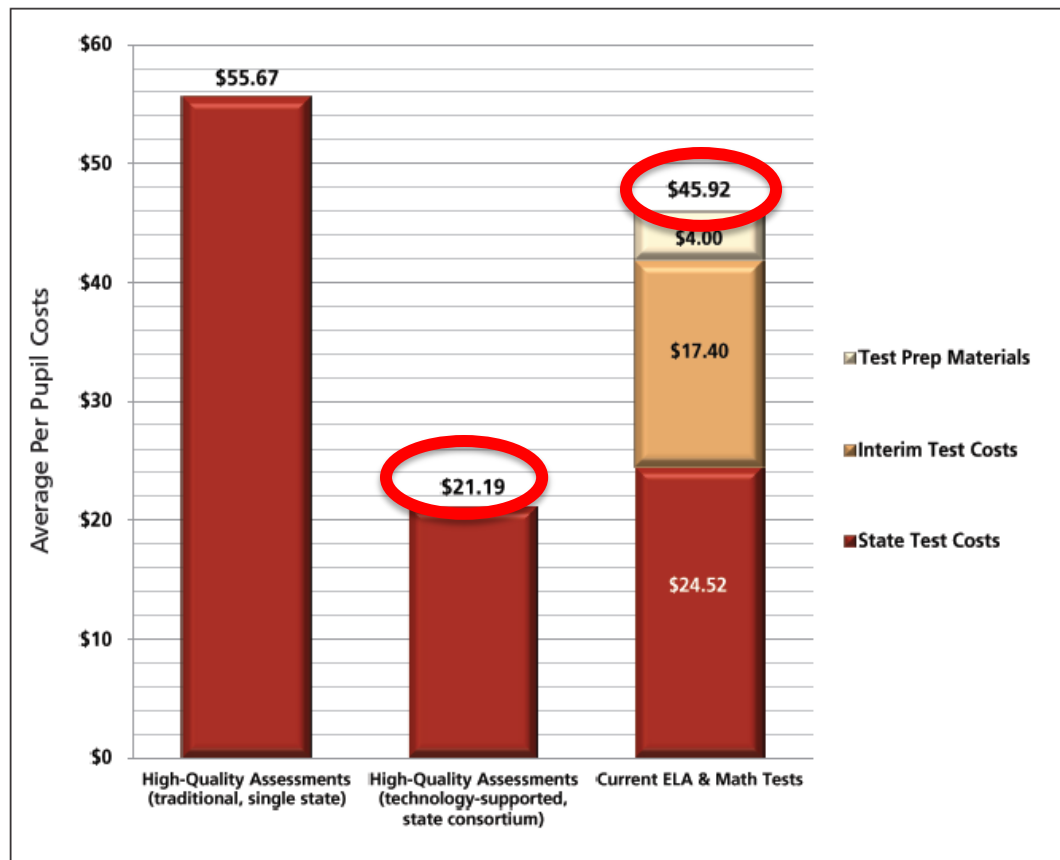
“I have seen more students who can pass the [state test] but cannot apply those skills to anything if it’s not in the test format. I have students who can do the test but can’t look up words in a dictionary and understand the different meanings.... As for higher quality teaching, I’m not sure I would call it that. Because of the pressure for passing scores, more and more time is spent practicing the test and putting everything in [the test] format.”

-- A Texas Teacher

What are the Benefits of Alternatives?

- Open-ended assessments -- essay examinations and performance tasks -- are more expensive to score, but they can support more diagnostic teaching and more ambitious learning,
- Involving teachers reaps additional benefits for implementing new standards and improving classroom practice

We Could Gain the Benefits of Higher-Quality Assessments and Spend Less Than We Are Spending Today ...



Sources: Topol et al. (2010); Topol (2012).

...If We Focus on How to Create a Higher-Quality System

Cost-saving approaches include:


- Multi-state consortia,
- Online delivery of assessments,
- Computer scoring of some open-ended items,
- Engagement of teachers in scoring and analyzing performance tasks,
- An integrated approach to creating a system of curriculum, assessment, instruction, and teacher development.

IT IS TIME TO CHANGE THE QUESTION:



“Can we Afford
High-Quality
Assessments?”

IT IS TIME TO CHANGE THE QUESTION:



“Can we afford
not to have
high-quality
assessments?”