

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

SBAC Weekly Update

Issue 29

Week ending Friday, August 19, 2011

Top News this Week

- Member states webinar on mathematics content specifications scheduled for August 29
- Feedback on draft ELA/literacy content specifications due August 29

The SBAC Weekly Update is an email sent each Friday to keep Consortium members and collaborators informed of new developments and upcoming events. The Update is widely distributed to Consortium State Leads, Work Group members, Consortium and WestEd staff, and Consortium advisors, partners, and service providers.

State members should feel free to share information in the Update with those who are interested in the Consortium's work.

Embedded links in the Update sometimes direct you to the website, <http://smarter.k12partners.org/>, designed for use by Consortium members. If you are a state employee in a Consortium state and need access to material on this website, please click the "Create new account" link on the website to register. If you are not a state employee in a Consortium state and need material from this site, please ask your state lead to forward it to you.

From the Executive Director

Greetings. As we enter the second half of August, students and teachers across the country are preparing for school, and in some states, classes are already underway. This is one of the great things about being in education: every year classes begin anew with fresh faces and eager participants. Even for those of us somewhat removed from the classroom, the beginning-of-school excitement is contagious and energizing. It's a hopeful—and busy—time of year for everyone.

We appreciate the efforts of states and partner organizations to submit feedback on the ELA/literacy content specifications. As a reminder, the online surveys will close on Monday, August 29, and we'll begin revising the document in preparation for another round of review.

I also want to provide an update on the mathematics content specifications. The release of that document, along with a webinar for member states—previously scheduled for August 22—will now occur on August 29 (a recording of the webinar will be available online shortly thereafter).

While this change will push back our schedule one week, it's the right thing to do. Our goal is to provide a high-quality document for review by member states and partners. The additional time will allow us to fully integrate feedback from our work groups and advisors,

as well as ensure that the scope and format of the math and ELA/literacy content specifications documents are well aligned. A revised schedule for the content specifications review is available at: <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Resources.aspx> .

Although the content specifications development and review process remains a major focus, we continue to engage with partners and the field. Last week, the U.S. Department of Education held the third in a series of public meetings on the Race to the Top Assessment grants. The session included representatives from both consortia and focused on addressing the needs of students with disabilities and English language learners. A panel of experts stressed the importance of developing assessments from the beginning with the needs of special populations in mind, as well as the need for collaboration within the consortia and with educators in the field.

I believe that our approach and our work to date align well with their recommendations. The Accessibility and Accommodations Work Group has done a terrific job in coordinating with other work groups. We are committed to ensuring that the needs of all students are considered during every stage of assessment development. JW

Announcements

No new announcements this week.

Upcoming Events

Governing States meeting—The next meeting of the Governing States will occur at 10 a.m. Pacific on Tuesday, August 23. Please see separate email for agenda and login information.

Mathematics content specifications release webinar—Please save Monday, August 29, for a Consortium webinar regarding the release of the mathematics draft content specifications. This webinar will help members more effectively facilitate their state’s review of the mathematics draft content specifications document. Note that this webinar was originally scheduled for August 22.

Work Group Co-Chairs meeting—The next meeting of the Work Group Co-Chairs will occur at 11 a.m to 1 p.m. Pacific on Friday, August 26. Please see separate email for agenda and login information.

Chiefs meeting—Chief state school officers from SBAC member states are invited to a face-to-face meeting on Wednesday, August 31, in Chicago. The final agenda for the meeting will be available on Wednesday, August 24.

Resources

Revised Master Work Plan—The Governing States recently approved the revised Master Work Plan for the summative assessment. Revisions were based on feedback gathered from member states and vendors in June and July. You can find the revised plan at <http://smarter.k12partners.org/content/master-work-plan> .

Updated summary presentation available—The SMARTER summary presentation has been updated to reflect Michael Hock’s election as an Executive Committee member. You can find the presentation at <http://smarter.k12partners.org/content/presentations>.

Answering Open Questions

Each week, we will address a question or two on the minds of Consortium members. Send your questions to sbac@wested.org.

What are the next steps for the Summative Assessment Master Work Plan?

Earlier this summer, feedback from work groups, member states, and vendors helped us create a comprehensive work plan for the development of the summative assessment. The plan includes timelines for 93 “Level 1” activities that describe significant work efforts, most of which will be accomplished through contracts with various service providers. The Master Work Plan is already helping to guide our work.

The next step is to group relevant tasks together so we can begin to articulate the procurement process. Obviously, issuing 93 separate contracts would not only be unwieldy, but also inefficient. Nor would we want to release only a handful of RFPs, since relying too heavily on a small number of vendors could be risky. Our goal is to strike a balance by bundling tasks that are similar, or have strong interdependencies, into manageable RFPs that will generate robust responses from vendors.

Early next week, our Governing States will review this grouping of Level 1 activities. We will share details about this project in the Update as they unfold.

Archive

Weekly selections of news items relevant to the Consortium are available at <http://smarter.k12partners.org/content/news-archive>.

Previous SBAC Weekly Updates are available at <http://smarter.k12partners.org/content/sbac-weekly-update-archive>.

Minutes from previously held meetings are available at <http://smarter.k12partners.org/content/agendas-and-minutes>.

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