

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

SBAC Weekly Update

Issue 33

Week ending Friday, September 16, 2011

Top News This Week

- System architecture workshops begin
- RFP posted for Accessibility and Accommodations Manual
- Sustainability Task Force nomination period begins
- Comment period on math content specifications closes September 19

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 internal SBAC website, <http://smarter.k12partners.org/>, available only to 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.

From the Executive Director

Greetings. Fall is upon us, and the Consortium is engaged in two significant efforts: finalizing the English language arts/literacy and math content specifications, and the kickoff of several significant projects through the release of contract solicitations and engagement with vendors.

The deadline to submit feedback on the first-round review of the draft math content specifications is Monday, September 19. In addition, we will be releasing a revised draft of the ELA/literacy content specifications that incorporates the feedback we received in August. The draft documents, feedback instructions, and a schedule of release dates and deadlines are posted here:

<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/Resources.aspx>.

Consortium work groups continue to develop contract solicitations at a rapid pace. I am pleased to report that we have posted an RFP to develop accessibility and accommodations policies and materials for English language learners, students with disabilities, and other special populations. The Accessibility and Accommodations Work Group developed the RFP, and it reflects the Consortium's commitment to assessments that are accessible to the broadest range of students while ensuring the accurate measurement of each student's readiness for a career or college, and that maintain the critical balance between equity and measurement consistency and accuracy.

The successful bidder will review member states' accessibility and accommodations guidelines and literature from the field to ensure that the Consortium draws on both the best of existing state practices and the latest research. The contractor will also develop an accessibility and accommodations manual that covers participation policies, access tools and procedures, allowable accommodations, and guidelines for matching students to access options.

This work will be immensely valuable in our efforts to provide effective, research-based accommodations for students who need them. As with all of the Consortium's RFPs, this document is posted on our website: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/Jobs-Contracts.aspx>. I encourage you to share this solicitation with interested stakeholders. JW

Announcements

System architecture workshops begin— Next week (September 19-22) the Technology Approach Work Group and key stakeholders will conduct the first of three workshops designed to elicit the inputs necessary to create the SBAC technical architecture. Week 1 will focus on the areas of machine and distributed scoring, reporting, dashboards, and portals. Members will have the opportunity to review the initial workshop deliverables via webinar-based showcases. Additional details and information will be sent out in October.

Summative Assessment Work Plan documents released—The Consortium posted the Summative Assessment Master Work Plan and Procurement Schedule this week. These documents provide details on the Consortium's major activities and contract solicitations during the life of the project: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/Resources.aspx>

SBAC Sustainability Task Force—Chiefs and State Leads: SBAC seeks nominations for a 14-member task force to develop a series of recommendations regarding how states will procure, administer, and maintain the SBAC system after the federal grant ends in October 2014. The task force's recommendations will guide future SBAC governance as well as provide states with a budget and procurement roadmap to prepare for the 2014 administration of the SBAC system. Nominations for participation on the task force by state chiefs, state leads, state procurement experts, or state central information officers should be sent to sbac@wested.org by Wednesday, September 21.

The RFP for the Accessibility and Accommodations Manual has been released to vendors—Proposals are due Wednesday, October 12, to produce a common, research-driven Accessibility and Accommodations Manual that will be used to maximize participation of students across SMARTER Balanced states. The RFP is now available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/Jobs-Contracts.aspx>.

Mathematics content specifications—Monday, September 19, is the final day to submit first-round comments on the draft SMARTER Balanced math content specifications. Instructions on how to provide feedback through online surveys for both individual reviewers and groups are included with the materials posted at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/Resources.aspx>. The surveys will close at 11:59 p.m. (Pacific).

Upcoming Events

Governing States meeting—Governing State leads: The next meeting of the Consortium's Governing States will occur on Tuesday, September 27, at 10 a.m. (Pacific). Please see separate email for agenda and webinar information.

Work Group Co-Chairs meeting—Work Group Co-Chairs: The next meeting of the Work Group Co-Chairs will occur on Friday, September 30, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. (Pacific). Please see separate email for agenda and webinar information.

Chiefs meeting—Chiefs and State Leads: The next meeting of the Member State Chiefs will occur on Monday, October 3, at 1 p.m. (Pacific). Note that this is one week later than the normally scheduled meetings on the last Monday of the month. Please see separate email for agenda and webinar information.

Resources

Computer adaptive testing fact sheet—An overview of computer adaptive testing is now available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/Resources.aspx>.

Relevant news items—State members: Weekly selections of news items relevant to the Consortium are available on the internal SBAC website at <http://smarter.k12partners.org/content/news-archive>.

Prior versions of the Weekly Update—State members: Previous SBAC Weekly Updates are available on the internal SBAC website at <http://smarter.k12partners.org/content/sbac-weekly-update-archive>.

SBAC meeting minutes—State members: Agendas and minutes from previously held meetings are available on the internal SBAC website at <http://smarter.k12partners.org/content/agendas-and-minutes>.

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.

Is SMARTER Balanced committed to adopting and enhancing the Michigan item bank?

Michigan generously offered the use of its item bank, a high-quality and dynamic system developed over several years. While we appreciate Michigan's offer, we also recognize that the item bank was not created with the Consortium's requirements in mind. Enhancing the Michigan system may be more expensive than other development options.

To ensure that the Consortium has a system that meets our needs at the lowest cost, we will release an RFP to develop item authoring and item pool applications later this month. Vendors will have the option to enhance the Michigan application or propose another method to create an item bank that meets the Consortium's required functionality.

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SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd—Project Management Partner

sbac@wested.org

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