

## Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

### Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 64

Week ending Friday, May 11, 2012

#### Top News This Week

- Formative Assessment Master Work Plan poll closes May 15
- Director of ELA/literacy announced
- Consortium's quarterly report now available

The Smarter Balanced 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.

Please note that embedded links in the Update sometimes direct readers to the Consortium's internal website, available only to Consortium members. If you are a state employee in a Consortium state and need access to material on this website, please contact [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org).

#### From the Executive Director

Greetings. Since we began our work, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium has been committed to teacher involvement in the development of the assessment system; in fact, teacher involvement is one of our seven organizing principles. We recognize that teachers are vital to our work, and we value and need their ongoing participation. This week, I'd like to highlight several of the many ongoing opportunities for teachers to be involved in the work of Smarter Balanced assessments.

Governing State leads have received emails with instructions to appoint a "teacher involvement coordinator." These individuals will serve as the point of contact for recruiting teachers for development and research opportunities. States will be leading the outreach to identify teachers selected for these opportunities. Throughout this work, teachers will have the opportunity to develop items and tasks for pilot test purposes and participate in research focus groups, small-scale assessment trials, and additional independent item review opportunities. These educator opportunities are all part of Contract-14 Pilot Item/Task/Stimulus Research, Development, and Reviews.

These opportunities for teachers are quickly approaching. Once teachers have been recruited, this summer they will begin item development for pilot test purposes. Teachers recruited for this activity will attend training sessions and work online in small groups to develop items and tasks. Next, teachers and other educational experts will review all of the materials we develop for content, bias and sensitivity, and accessibility. These qualified individuals will be recruited and selected from Governing States this spring, and the review period will occur this summer. This fall, designated teachers at participating schools will be trained to administer trial assessments to students in their classrooms as part of our detailed analysis of how students interact with new item and task formats.

Additional opportunities for teachers will be offered through independent item reviews, and this fall teachers will also be able to participate in rigorous item review workshops using their experience and content expertise. Finally, this fall we intend to send out an "all call" to classroom teachers across the Consortium, inviting teachers to volunteer to participate in our pilot testing in spring 2013. These are just a few of the multiple—and varied—opportunities teachers have for engagement.

Teachers are so important in the development of the assessment system. Teacher involvement is ongoing and comprehensive. Many of us at Smarter Balanced are former teachers, and we appreciate their valuable contributions. JW

#### Announcements

Formative Assessment Master Work Plan poll—Governing State Leads are requested to vote on the

Formative Assessment Master Work Plan by Tuesday, May 15. Please see the email sent from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org) on May 9 for instructions.

Director of ELA/literacy announced—Barbara Kapinus, PhD, has joined Smarter Balanced as the director of English language arts and literacy. As the ELA/literacy director, Barbara will work to ensure that Smarter Balanced assessments effectively measure the depth and breadth of the Common Core State Standards in ELA/literacy. She will oversee the ELA/literacy assessment item and performance task writing and review, as well as support the production and the development of assessment and professional learning materials for the Smarter Balanced assessment system.

Educator opportunities for participation—Governing State leads: Over the past two weeks, the Governing State leads received emails providing instructions on recruiting educators to support pilot test item and task development, stimulus reviews, and research on automated scoring and item procurement options. In addition, they were asked to identify an individual in their state to serve as a teacher involvement coordinator. This individual will serve as the point of contact for development and research opportunities. Upcoming development opportunities and recruiting timelines were also described so that Smarter Balanced states are aware of and can support recruitment activities. These educator opportunities are all part of Contract-14 Pilot Item/Task/Stimulus Research, Development, and Reviews. CTB/McGraw-Hill is leading the contract with several partners including American Institutes for Research, Data Recognition Corporation, Council for Aid to Education, Human Resources Research Organization, and College Board. Please see separate emails for details.

Webinars for Accessibility and Accommodations announced—In support of the work associated with RFP-06, Development of Accessibility and Accommodations Policies and Materials, Smarter Balanced is requesting state leads to attend one of two webinars. The purpose of the webinar is to explain the conceptual framework that is intended as the foundation for future policy recommendations and to review preliminary recommendations about the support and tools available to various student subgroups. The webinar will be held twice to maximize opportunity for participants to attend. The dates and times are listed below.

- May 15, 2012, 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. eastern
- May 17, 2012, 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. eastern

Please see the email sent from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org) on May 1 for further details.

Updated Item Specifications documents are available—The item specifications provide item writers with guidance on how to translate the Common Core State Standards into items and tasks that will be contained within the Smarter Balanced assessment. It is recommended that individuals read the General Specifications document to best orient them to the breadth of the available materials. There are both item tables and sample items available. These documents represent the best current thinking on item alignment; however, we expect them to be updated as ongoing item and test developments occur. In addition, guidelines for bias and sensitivity, accessibility and accommodations, and style help item developers and reviewers ensure consistency and fairness. The updated item specifications materials are available on the Consortium's website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/#item>. Below are direct links to the general ELA/literacy and mathematics item/task specifications documents.

- ELA/literacy: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/TaskItemSpecifications/EnglishLanguageArtsLiteracy/ELAGeneralItemandTaskSpecifications.pdf>
- Mathematics:
  - Grades 3–5 <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/TaskItemSpecifications/Mathematics/MathematicsGeneralItemandTaskSpecificationsGrades3-5.pdf>
  - Grades 6–8 <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/TaskItemSpecifications/Mathematics/MathematicsGeneralItemandTaskSpecificationsGrades6-8.pdf>

- High school <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/TaskItemSpecifications/Mathematics/MathematicsGeneralItemandTaskSpecificationsHighSchool.pdf>

**Smarter Balanced eNewsletter launched**—Smarter News, the Consortium’s monthly eNewsletter, will provide updates on the development of the assessment system and activities in member states. The May edition includes information on new Common Core State Standards tools and resources, support for classroom teachers, and technology readiness—along with recent articles and announcements from Smarter Balanced. Smarter News is available on the Consortium’s website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/about/>. To sign up to receive future editions, visit <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/stay-connected/>. Please be sure to add [info@smarterbalanced.org](mailto:info@smarterbalanced.org) as an approved sender to ensure the message doesn’t get labeled as spam.

**New email addresses**—Smarter Balanced has transitioned to a uniform email address format: [firstname.lastname@smarterbalanced.org](mailto:firstname.lastname@smarterbalanced.org). Email sent to the @k12.wa.us or @ccsso.org accounts will be forwarded, but please update your contacts and address books for the following Consortium staff:

- Joe Willhoft ([Joe.Willhoft@smarterbalanced.org](mailto:Joe.Willhoft@smarterbalanced.org))
- Tony Alpert ([Tony.Alpert@smarterbalanced.org](mailto:Tony.Alpert@smarterbalanced.org))
- Marty McCall ([Marty.McCall@smarterbalanced.org](mailto:Marty.McCall@smarterbalanced.org))
- Jaci King ([Jacqueline.King@smarterbalanced.org](mailto:Jacqueline.King@smarterbalanced.org))
- Eddie Arnold ([Eddie.Arnold@smarterbalanced.org](mailto:Eddie.Arnold@smarterbalanced.org))
- Barbara Kapinus ([Barb.Kapinus@smarterbalanced.org](mailto:Barb.Kapinus@smarterbalanced.org))

### **Upcoming Events**

**Chiefs meeting**—Chiefs and state leads: Due to the Memorial Day holiday, the next meeting of the member state Chiefs will occur via webinar on Tuesday, May 29, at 1:00 p.m. (Pacific).

### **Resources**

**Year Two, Second Quarter Project Report available**—The quarterly project report for the period ending March 31, 2012, can be found at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Quarterly-Report-March-2012.pdf>. The report details the Consortium’s progress in key areas and priorities for the next three months.

**External website**—The Smarter Balanced external website can be found at [www.smarterbalanced.org](http://www.smarterbalanced.org). The site showcases the innovative work of the Consortium and provides frequent updates on activities, milestones, and events. Visitors are able to explore an interactive timeline of activities by school year, download new fact sheets and resources, and sign up for a monthly e-newsletter.

**Collaboration Site**—Consortium members: The Consortium uses an internal collaboration site hosted by Google Docs to enable information sharing and collaboration among the member states. If you are a state employee in a Consortium state and need access to material on this website, please contact [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org).

**Relevant news items**—State members: Weekly selections of news items relevant to the Consortium are available on the internal Smarter Balanced website at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/communications/news-archive>.

**Prior versions of the Weekly Update**—State members: Previous Smarter Balanced Weekly Updates are available on the internal Smarter Balanced website at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/communications/weekly-update-archive>.

**Smarter Balanced meeting minutes**—State members: Agendas and minutes from previously held meetings are available on the internal Smarter Balanced website at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/meetings>.

### **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](mailto:sbac@wested.org).

*Will Smarter Balanced assessments be available for private schools in the 2014-15 school year in states that will be using the Smarter Balanced assessments to test public school students?*

Access to the Smarter Balanced assessments for private schools is one of a number of implementation issues being addressed by the Consortium's Sustainability Task Force. This task force will provide recommendations regarding how states will procure, administer, and maintain the Smarter Balanced assessment system after the federal grant ends in October 2014. This work is associated with RFP-22, Organization Development and Business Process Consulting. More information is posted here: <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Jobs-Contracts.aspx>. Recommendations from the task force are expected later this year.

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**Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**

WestEd—Project Management Partner

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