

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 73

Week ending Friday, July 13, 2012

Top News This Week

- Governing States elect California's Deb Sigman to Executive Committee
- Collaboration Conference registration is now open

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.

From the Executive Director

Greetings. I want to congratulate Deb Sigman, state lead from California, on her election to the Executive Committee. Over the past year, California has made a tremendous contribution to the Consortium, with representatives serving on seven of the 10 state-led work groups. I am excited to have Deb serve on the committee, and we look forward to benefiting from her expertise as we continue the development of the assessment system.

Last week, I wrote about the online trainings for item writers and reviewers that are now available on the Smarter Balanced website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/item-writing-and-review/>. I hope everyone involved with the Consortium will take the opportunity to watch the videos or flip through the presentations. The modules on evidence-centered design and Universal Design—which many of us are familiar with—detail in plain language how these approaches are shaping the development of the assessment system from beginning to end. Other presentations on grade-level considerations and the item review process highlight the deliberate, multi-step process for creating an assessment item or performance task. While these training modules are designed to help writers and reviewers create high-quality items and tasks aligned to our specifications, they also provide a look under the hood at our work for interested stakeholders—including administrators, content specialists, and policymakers.

In addition, we recently posted the draft Smarter Balanced Quality Assurance Approach, which describes the principles and processes for testing the various technology components of the assessment system prior to implementation. Effective quality assurance testing will be critical to a successful launch of the assessment system, and we are committed to developing a comprehensive strategy. The document, which is now being reviewed, is available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Draft-Quality-Assurance-Approach.pdf>. JW

Announcements

Governing States elect Deb Sigman to Executive Committee—The Governing States have elected Deb Sigman, state lead from California, to the Smarter Balanced Executive Committee. Deb has over 35 years of experience in the assessment and accountability arena in K-12 California public schools. She has

served as a district administrator overseeing various aspects of assessment, research, and evaluation, including the development of district-level assessments and the training of teachers in the interpretation and use of assessment data. She served as California's State Testing Director from January 2004 until May 2008, when she then became the Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction for the California Department of Education. She currently serves as the vice-chair of the National Assessment Governing Board-CCSSO Policy Task Force and as a member of the Education Information Management Advisory Consortium (EIMAC) Assessment Task Force. Deb will fill the position Joseph Martineau recently vacated when he was elected as Executive Committee Co-Chair. The term runs through September 30, 2012.

Collaboration Conference meeting—Smarter Balanced is pleased to announce that registration is now available for the upcoming Collaboration Conference and Chiefs meeting, September 11–14, 2012, in St. Louis, MO. Invited participants have received an email invitation from sbac@wested.org with instructions on registration for the conference. Events during this collaboration meeting are role-specific, so please be certain of the session days you are signing up to attend. Please refer to the email invitation sent from sbac@wested.org on July 13. Once you have reviewed the invitation, if you have any questions regarding your attendance on a particular day, please check with the Project Management Partner (WestEd) at sbac@wested.org.

Summative assessment decision summary—A summary of key state decision points for the development of the summative assessment through 2014 is now available. Developed with input from state leads and Higher Education Leads, the document outlines the process for reaching consensus within the Consortium on issues such as achievement level descriptors, accommodations and accessibility policy, and the sustainability plan. The goal of the document is to help member states plan for major decisions and appropriately engage K-12 and higher education stakeholders. The timeline is available on the Smarter Balanced Collaboration Site at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/document-library>.

Proficiency-Based Learning Task Force update—The Proficiency-Based Learning Task Force held its first webinar on June 28, with 45 participants from 14 states as well as representatives from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Asia Society, and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The states had an opportunity to share state definitions of proficiency-based learning, explore commonalities across states, and start the discussion on overlaps with the developing Smarter Balanced assessment structure. The next webinar is scheduled for July 18 at 11:00 a.m. Pacific; during this webinar, participants will provide feedback on a draft outlining common definitions and implementation strategies across participating states. States interested in participating in this discussion that were not able to attend the first webinar are welcome to join this next webinar. For more information, please contact the group facilitator, David Ruff, at druff@greatschoolspartnership.org.

Webinar on online Braille test interface—The Oregon Department of Education will present an information session about its online Braille test interface to the Consortium on July 20 from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Pacific. This information session will cover the process Oregon followed in developing the Braille interface, an overview of the test delivery format and Braille interface components, and a discussion of the lessons learned during implementation. Please see the email sent from sbac@wested.org on July 10.

Training materials for item writers and reviewers on website—Training materials have been posted on the Smarter Balanced website to provide background on the item and performance task development process and to train writers and reviewers: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/item-writing-and-review/>.

This summer and fall, Smarter Balanced will work with educators to develop assessment items and performance tasks in English language arts/literacy and mathematics for the Pilot Test of the assessment system in early 2013. Teachers have been recruited by Governing States to write and review items and performance tasks for content, bias/sensitivity, and accessibility. This work will be guided by the [Smarter Balanced item/task specifications and review guidelines](#).

[ICCS summer meeting registration is now open](#)—Registration is now open for CCSSO's Implementing the Common Core Standards (ICCS) summer meeting on August 16–17, 2012, in Seattle, Washington. This meeting will focus on building the capacity of state agencies to support classroom-level implementation of the Common Core State Standards in preparation for common assessments. Please refer to the email sent from meetings@ccsso.org on June 26. Contact the following CCSSO staff members with any questions: Margaret Millar at margaretm@ccsso.org (agenda feedback), Michele Parks at michelep@ccsso.org (event logistics), or Renata Lewis at renatal@ccsso.org (ICCS membership or reimbursements).

Upcoming Events

TAC meeting—The next meeting of the Smarter Balanced Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will occur on July 25–26, 2012, in Denver. As in the past, our member states are welcome to participate in person or virtually via live webinar. Those states wishing to participate in person may send one representative and will be required to use its own funds for transportation, lodging, per diem, and other expenses. If your state is planning to participate in person, please email sbac@wested.org as soon as possible so we can confirm that the meeting space will accommodate all participants.

Resources

External website—The Smarter Balanced external website can be found at 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 Apps 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.

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.

A question came up on this week's All States call about what information can be shared about the Pilot Test, scheduled for early 2013. Here is a brief summary of our discussion.

The Pilot Test—which will begin in late February and run through March—will provide the first opportunity for a large-scale tryout of the 10,000 assessment items and performance tasks now being developed. Educators are eager to learn more about the assessment system and see firsthand what the items and performance tasks will look like. That's why we have decided to make participation in the Pilot Test open to all classrooms in the Consortium.

The administration of the Pilot Test will be conducted by the contractor for RFP-19 Test Administration—set to be selected this summer. Additional information about how to participate in the Pilot Test will be made available to states after the start of the school year in September or October. It is expected that state leads will coordinate outreach to schools in their state.

Since the Pilot Test is designed to provide information about the performance of assessment items and performance tasks—not to accurately measure student achievement—the Consortium won't be able to provide detailed student performance results back to schools. Nonetheless, we want to design the Pilot Test so that some small amount of performance data is available. The Pilot Test will also include brief surveys for students and teachers about their experiences taking and administering the assessment. This feedback will inform the development of the bulk of items and tasks needed for the implementation of the assessment system in the 2014-15 school year.

It is important to remember that this will not be the only opportunity for schools and educators to experience the assessments. In early 2014, a large-scale Field Test will be conducted across member states. Our goal with the Field Test will be to ensure that administration, scoring, and reporting systems function correctly in preparation for the implementation of the assessment system in the 2014-15 school year.

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Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd—Project Management Partner

sbac@wested.org

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