# Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 98 Week ending Friday, January 18, 2013

## **Top News This Week**

- Executive Committee Co-Chair election process launched
- Technology Readiness Tool webinar on Wednesday, 1/23
- Pilot Test page for state leads launching soon on the Collaboration Site

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. Access to this website is currently limited to Consortium state department of education officials and their delegates. For news and other important information related to Consortium activities, we encourage individuals to visit our public website at <a href="http://www.smarterbalanced.org">http://www.smarterbalanced.org</a> and sign up for the monthly newsletter by clicking on the Stay Connected link located at the top of the homepage.

#### From the Executive Director

Greetings. I want to alert you to an important report issued this week by the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, & Student Testing (CRESST) at UCLA. The report, *On the Road to Assessing Deeper Learning: The Status of Smarter Balanced and PARCC Assessment Consortia*, was funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and was released on January 16th, in conjunction with a webinar sponsored by the Alliance for Excellent Education (AEE).

My reason for bringing this to your attention is that the CRESST report provides an independent summary of the plans and progress of both Smarter Balanced and PARCC, with particular emphasis on how the two consortia will assess "deeper learning." Expecting students to engage in deeper learning—which the report defines as "mastering and being able to apply core academic content and cognitive strategies related to complex thinking, communication, and problem solving"—is fundamental to the Common Core State Standards and to the assessments being developed by both consortia. I encourage you to add the CRESST report to your reading list for insights into how the new standards and assessments will be different from "business as usual."

During the AEE webinar, CRESST's Dr. Joan Herman said, "From available data so far, our findings indicate that both Smarter Balanced and PARCC will clearly increase the intellectual rigor of what is assessed." She added that the assessments will have a major impact on classroom instruction. Professor Robert Linn added, "To perform well on the consortia assessments, students will need deeper levels of knowledge plus an improved ability to apply that knowledge to challenging problems."

Below are a few excerpts from the report, which can be found at <a href="http://www.cse.ucla.edu/products/reports.php?action=fetch&id=823">http://www.cse.ucla.edu/products/reports.php?action=fetch&id=823</a>:

#### **Assessment System Components**

"The two consortia's assessment plans differ in their approach to the on-demand assessment. Smarter Balanced end-of-year, on-demand assessments will utilize computer-adaptive testing (CAT), where complex algorithms are used to customize the items administered to each individual based on his or her ability level, which is inferred from responses to prior items. PARCC's technology-based, end-of-year assessment, in contrast, will use standard, fixed test forms."

• "On the formative assessment front, PARCC plans to provide teachers and schools with tools they can use throughout the year to diagnose student learning needs relative to the CCSS, and mid-year, benchmark performance assessments intended to provide feedback on students' preparation for the summative, end-of-year performance tasks. Smarter Balanced, in contrast, will provide districts and schools with item banks from which they can construct interim tests to monitor and diagnose student progress and/or serve predictive purposes by mirroring the end-of-year assessment. Smarter Balanced also will make available professional development resources and tools to support teachers' formative assessment practices."

## Similarities and Differences in Consortia Approaches

- "For Smarter Balanced, all the relevant information is contained in a single public document for each subject area, Content Specifications for English Language Arts and Content Specifications for Mathematics. Smarter Balanced Content Specifications also establish both assessment targets for each of its major claims and the DOK levels at which each target may be assessed. Smarter Balanced Content Specifications thus clearly and publically define and circumscribe the domain model to be assessed."
- "Smarter Balanced issued a request for proposals (RFP) to develop task and item specifications aligned with its *Content Specifications*. [...] The contract has been completed; all available item and task specifications are now posted online (see <a href="http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments">http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments</a>)."
- "In contrast, PARCC's full domain model is still under development."

JW

#### **Announcements**

<u>Executive Committee Co-Chair election process launched</u>—State leads: Nominees are currently being sought for the position of Executive Committee Co-Chair, to fill the remainder of the term held by Carissa Miller. The term of this position runs through September 30, 2013.

Anyone can nominate a candidate, and individuals can nominate themselves. All nominees must come from a Governing State and have approval from the nominee's chief state school officer indicating support for participation. Nominations close on Tuesday, January 29. Once the slate of nominees is finalized, the Governing State Leads will vote to select the new EC Co-Chair. Please see the January 15 email sent from <a href="mailto:sbac@wested.org">sbac@wested.org</a> for details.

<u>Technology Readiness Tool webinar on Wednesday, 1/23</u>—K-12 state leads: Smarter Balanced invites state leads and state readiness coordinators (SRCs) to attend a webinar on Wednesday, January 23, at 11:00 a.m. Pacific time, showcasing the new features of the Technology Readiness Tool. The webinar will include a discussion of the reports from the December 17 snapshot, review future tool changes, and provide an opportunity for questions and answers regarding the manner in which the tool will use the Smarter Balanced minimum system requirements in the new reports. Please see the January 16 email sent from sbac@wested.org for details.

<u>Pilot Test page for state leads launching soon on the Collaboration Site</u>—In the coming week, the internal Collaboration Site will be expanded to contain a Pilot Test page for state leads. The page will allow state leads to quickly access announcements, presentations, emails, and other relevant Pilot Test documents. State leads will receive an email with further specifics from sbac@wested.org.

<u>Pilot Test page launched on the Smarter Balanced public website</u>—Smarter Balanced has launched a Pilot Test page on the Smarter Balanced website, a useful resource for anyone interested in information about the Pilot Test. It contains background information about how Pilot Test items were developed, the Pilot Test sample design, school participation information, and links to test administration resources and FAQs. The Pilot Test page is located here: <a href="http://www.smarterbalanced.org/pilot-test/">http://www.smarterbalanced.org/pilot-test/</a>.

Technology Strategy Framework & System Requirements Specifications updated—The technology planning framework has been updated to clarify the minimum hardware and software requirements that will allow schools and districts to evaluate which of their existing devices will support the administration of next-generation assessments. The updated technology planning framework was posted on Monday, January 14. The recommended minimum hard drive space for new purchases has been amended from "recommending an 80 GB hard drive" to "recommending an 80 GB hard drive or at least 1 GB of hard drive space available." Additionally, the minimum requirements for users with Windows-based tablet devices running Windows 8 now exclude Windows Runtime (RT). The full Smarter Balanced Technology Strategy Framework & System Requirements Specifications report can be accessed at <a href="http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/technology/">http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/technology/</a>.

### **Upcoming Events**

<u>Updated December and January meeting schedule</u>—The updated December and January meeting schedule is posted on the Collaboration Site homepage under Recent & Upcoming Events: <a href="https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home">https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home</a>.

#### Resources

<u>Contacting Smarter Balanced</u>—The Smarter Balanced external website (<u>www.smarterbalanced.org</u>) showcases the innovative work of the Consortium and provides frequent updates on activities, milestones, and events. Visitors can submit questions or reach Smarter Balanced staff at <a href="http://www.smarterbalanced.org/contact-us/">http://www.smarterbalanced.org/contact-us/</a>. Consortium members may contact <a href="mailto:sbac@wested.org">sbac@wested.org</a> for information on upcoming meetings and events.

<u>Collaboration Site</u>—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 <a href="mailto:sbac@wested.org">sbac@wested.org</a>.

<u>Follow Smarter Balanced on Twitter</u>—Follow @SmarterBalanced for resources and links to the latest news about the Consortium.

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

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

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