

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

SBAC Weekly Update

Issue 6

Week ending Friday, March 11, 2011

This is a weekly email update for the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium. It is distributed to the Consortium's State Leads, Work Group Co-Chairs, and to Consortium and WestEd staff.

State Leads: Please feel free to share the contents of this update with your colleagues, such as members of your SBAC team; with state leadership, such as your chief, public information official, director of assessment, and directors of curriculum and instruction; and with staff in the offices of your governor, your state board of education, and your legislature.

Work Group Co-Chairs: Please be sure to share this update with the members of your Work Group.

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From the Executive Director

Greetings. During the past three weeks I've had the opportunity to present at conferences and invited sessions to several different audiences, including: the Association of Test Publishers (ATP), the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), a principals' group in Eastern Washington, and the State Boards of Education in California and in South Carolina. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some common reactions and questions across those groups.

First, our design that proposes a system of assessments that support schools and teachers is very well received. Our attention to creating open and flexible interim assessments that can be used by students and teachers to guide learning and teaching is viewed as a real strength. Additionally, audiences respond positively to our commitment to provide teachers with tools that support their development and improve their teaching. That these two components are optional parts of the system does not appear to be a major stumbling block.

Generally, audiences seem to appreciate learning more about adaptive testing and how it works. There is a lot of interest in the fact that adaptive testing affords accurate measurement of where students are across the entire range of the achievement scale. I occasionally get questions about the feasibility of adaptive testing, and about whether or not our goals are overly ambitious. My sense is that this comes from folks who do not have much experience with this assessment model, and who do not know about the successes

that have already been experienced with Oregon's and Idaho's assessments and with other testing programs like the GRE, GMAT, TOEFL, and ASVAB.

Another concern is that some schools and districts might not be ready for full-scale computerized testing in 2014-15. Our decision to provide a paper/pencil transition option for up to three years eases this concern. I always point out, however, that this transition plan will be provided to alleviate school-by-school circumstances, and will not be implemented wholesale on an entire-state basis.

Finally, I get positive response to our open governance structure and our engaging all Consortium states and other stakeholders in our work. The positive reaction to this is very encouraging, as our commitment to consensus-based decision making is such a core Consortium value.

I would be interested in knowing the kinds of responses you are getting. I will build some time into the agenda for our Advisory States meeting in April for a brief discussion.

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Announcements

Starting March 14, Work Groups will use WebEx for Internet conferencing. Pay close attention to upcoming meeting announcements featuring new links and instructions for attending online Work Group meetings.

On February 25 the state of Washington, as the Consortium's fiscal agent, released SBAC's Request for Proposals (RFP) for a Communications Service Provider. The link to the RFP is <http://www.k12.wa.us/RFP/pubdocs/SBACCommunicationsRFP.pdf>. As stated in the RFP, the state of Washington will manage this solicitation; other states are encouraged to share this RFP with any communications service providers they feel would be excellent candidates for this opportunity. Proposals must be submitted by 4:30 Pacific on March 25, 2011.

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Upcoming Events

State Chiefs meeting—SBAC will be presenting to chief state school officers on March 27 in Washington DC. This is part of the CCSSO Legislative Conference occurring March 27–29.

All States meeting—The Consortium's 31 State Leads are invited to meet April 7, 2011, directly following the ICCS SCASS meeting to be held on April 5–6, 2011. See the email from March 2 regarding meeting registration and travel arrangements. State Leads and Executive Committee members, please save the following dates:

- ICCS SCASS: Tuesday and Wednesday, April 5–6, 2011 (all day)
- SBAC All States meeting: Thursday, April 7, 2011 (half-day, beginning AM)

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Resources

Master work plan—You can see the Consortium's month-by-month goals for assessment design and technology development in the Master Work Plan spreadsheet. This document is available at <http://smarter.k12partners.org/content/document-library>.

Monthly USED report—The Consortium's February 2011 monthly progress report to the U.S. Department of Education is available at <http://smarter.k12partners.org/content/communications>.

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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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