

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

SBAC Weekly Update

Special Edition: SBAC Work Groups Turn Plan Into Action

Tuesday, July 26, 2011

From the Executive Director

Greetings. I want to provide this special update on an important Consortium meeting last week that—for the first time—brought our work group co-chairs together with Governing State leads and brought our prospective vendors up to speed on our Master Work Plan. The communications and connections made, especially among work groups, sparked new synergy and a new confidence about our task ahead. Gone was the feeling once jokingly described as riding in the back of a speeding taxi, with little control over the ride or hope of arriving safely at your destination.

For many months our work groups have been meeting and collaborating individually and through regular conference calls and informal follow-ups. Last week's two-day meeting afforded the opportunity to build new in-person relationships and shared expertise among and across groups. For example, the Reporting Work Group continued to meet well into the evening over dinner. And, at one point the Performance Tasks Work Group, when discussing scoring, got "real-time" help from across the room when a member of another work group overheard the discussion and offered a valuable suggestion. During the closing wrap-up, Vince Dean (MI) from Test Design commented, "I am struck by the expertise and the quality of people here in this room. I feel even more optimistic that we will be able to do this."

John Jesse (UT) from the Technology Approach Work Group said it was "the most productive SBAC meeting that I've ever attended." He said it reminded him of a theme from *Seinfeld*, that a weekend away with someone you're dating is equivalent to six months of normal dating time. "This was like a weekend," John told the group to laughs. "It would have taken six months of conference calls . . . and we got a better result." He said work group members will go back home to their states and resume conference calls with a new understanding of the work and their partners. In fact, he said, the two-day Denver meeting was like several *Seinfeld* dating weekends and "almost like engagement." More laughs.

Joseph Martineau (MI), the executive committee liaison to the Research and Evaluation Work Group, told the group: "This time together was really the key. Our group was able to touch base with each of the other work groups to explore research and validity issues that we need to focus on."

In particular, Marty Gephart of Vermont, said, "this has been really great" as SMARTER works to identify "what educators need to know and what they need to have" to build knowledge and make the assessments a success.

I also want to note that we received valuable feedback from interested vendors and are looking for more ways to share information and learn from each other as we move forward.

At the end of the meeting, PMP director Stanley Rabinowitz reminded Governing State leads and work group co-chairs that each participant needed to carry the energy from this meeting back into the work groups and our regular conference calls. “The collaboration across the past two days has been valuable,” he said, “but it doesn’t stop here.” The Executive Committee is looking to schedule another meeting of work group co-chairs and Governing State leads—possibly attached to another scheduled gathering—sometime in the winter.

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