

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

SBAC Weekly Update

Issue 30

Week ending Friday, August 26, 2011

Top News this Week

- Member states webinar on mathematics content specifications scheduled for August 29
- Feedback on draft ELA/literacy content specifications due August 29
- Chiefs meeting in Chicago on August 31

The SBAC 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.

Embedded links in the Update sometimes direct you to the internal SBAC website, <http://smarter.k12partners.org/>, available only to Consortium members. If you are a state employee in a Consortium state and need access to material on this website, please click the "Create new account" link on the website to register.

From the Executive Director

Greetings. Next week features two important Consortium events. On Monday, we'll release the math content specifications and hold a webinar for member states (all documents and a recording of the webinar will be posted online at: <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Resources.aspx>). Now that drafts of the English language arts/literacy and math content specifications are complete, we will shift our focus to improving and refining these documents based on feedback from our partners.

I'm pleased to report that more than 180 individuals and 30 organizations have already submitted feedback on the ELA/literacy content specifications. This response indicates a broad understanding among partners and stakeholders that these documents are critical to the development of an assessment system that accurately measures the knowledge and skills embedded in the Common Core State Standards. I want to thank those who took the time to complete the survey and solicited feedback from members and constituents.

On Wednesday, we will convene chief state school officers in Chicago. The full-day meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss key aspects of the assessment system and the structure of the Consortium. SMARTER Balanced is a state-led consortium. Engaging chief state school officers and their representatives through monthly conference calls and quarterly meetings is an important way to ensure that their input shapes our work.

Finally, I wanted to share a recent newspaper article from California. Around the country, state education departments are releasing the results of their annual assessments. Unfortunately, just as the results from last year's class are delivered to school districts, the next school year is already underway.

One of the clear advantages of computerized assessment is a dramatic reduction in the amount of time required to deliver results to school districts, teachers, and parents. Instead of months, results from the SMARTER Balanced summative assessment will be available within weeks.

The Union Democrat (Sonora, California) reported on the changes that SMARTER Balanced will bring. Tuolumne County Deputy Superintendent of Schools Margie Bulkin summed up one of the key benefits of

SMARTER, noting that teachers will be able to measure student progress throughout the year: “I’m particularly excited about SMARTER Balanced. It gives a more meaningful interpretation in real time.” Read the full article here: <http://www.uniondemocrat.com/20110816104462/News/Local-News/Mother-Lode-schools-match-state-test-scores>.

Her comments remind me that the annual release of state test scores provides a perfect opportunity to discuss the changes SMARTER Balanced will bring for teachers, parents, and students. JW

Announcements

ELA/literacy content specifications—Feedback on draft SMARTER Balanced ELA/literacy content specifications is due by 11:59 p.m. Pacific time on Monday, August 29. Instructions on how to provide feedback through online surveys for both individual reviewers and groups are included with the materials posted at: <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Resources.aspx>.

Work group name change—The Research and Evaluation Work Group has changed its name to the Validation and Psychometrics Work Group to better describe the work group’s function and capacity.

Unsolicited emails and vendor requests—State Members: Over the course of this project our state members may receive emails from vendors or unknown individuals with requests for contact details, procurement updates, or other information. While we likely can’t prevent such messages, we would like to at least be aware of them. Therefore, if you receive any message from a vendor or an unknown individual who requests this type of information about SBAC, please forward the email or direct the sender to contact Mike Middleton (Michael.Middleton@k12.wa.us) and Deb Crawford (Debbie.Crawford@k12.wa.us) at OSPI.

Upcoming Events

Governing States meeting—Governing State Leads: The next meeting of the Consortium’s Governing States will occur on Tuesday, September 13, at 10 a.m. (Pacific). Please see separate email for agenda and webinar information.

Mathematics content specifications release webinar—State Members: Please save Monday, August 29, for a Consortium webinar regarding the release of the mathematics draft content specifications. This webinar will help members more effectively facilitate their state’s review of the mathematics draft content specifications document. Note that this webinar was originally scheduled for August 22.

Chiefs meeting—Chief state school officers from SBAC member states will be meeting in person on Wednesday, August 31, in Chicago. This meeting complements the regular monthly meetings between SBAC management and our Chiefs.

Resources

Innovative Item Development webinar recording—State Members: The recording and presentation from the August 15 webinar on Innovative Item Development is now available on the internal SBAC website at <http://smarter.k12partners.org/content/webinars-0>.

Common Core State Standards videos—The Hunt Institute and the Council for Chief State School Officers have developed a series of video vignettes that describe and explain the Common Core State Standards. In the videos key Standards writers talk about how the Standards were developed, who was involved, and the goals they set for all students. The link to the YouTube site that houses the CCSS video vignettes is available at <http://www.youtube.com/user/TheHuntInstitute>.

Relevant news items—State Members: Weekly selections of news items relevant to the Consortium are available on the internal SBAC website at <http://smarter.k12partners.org/content/news-archive>.

Prior versions of the Weekly Update—State Members: Previous SBAC Weekly Updates are available on the internal SBAC website at <http://smarter.k12partners.org/content/sbac-weekly-update-archive>.

SBAC meeting minutes—State Members: Agendas and minutes from previously held meetings are available on the internal SBAC website at <http://smarter.k12partners.org/content/agendas-and-minutes>.

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.

What is the role of Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs) in the SMARTER Balanced assessment system and when will they be developed?

ALDs will help communicate the content and rigor of the assessment to stakeholders. In addition, the ALDs will assist in item development planning, test blueprints, and in the development of reports.

Development of the initial ALDs will begin in December 2011 and is scheduled to continue through March 2012. The initial ALDs will be used during the initial Achievement Standard Setting scheduled for August 2014. The final ALDs will be completed during the final Achievement Standard Setting that will take place after the first year of operational administration.

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SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd—Project Management Partner

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