

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

SBAC Weekly Update

Issue 32

Week ending Friday, September 9, 2011

Top News this Week

- South Dakota becomes a Governing State
- New EC liaisons for Accessibility and Accommodations Work Group and Test Design Work Group
- Computer adaptive testing fact sheet available

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. I'm pleased to welcome South Dakota as the Consortium's newest Governing State. As an Advisory State, South Dakota participated in the Transition to the Common Core Work Group, and we look forward to an expanded role for the Mount Rushmore State. SMARTER Balanced now includes 20 Governing and nine Advisory States that educate nearly half of America's K-12 students. We continue to work with state chiefs, governors, and state boards of education to provide up-to-date information about our progress.

Next week, we will release a summative assessment procurement schedule. The schedule is based on the Summative Assessment Master Work Plan and includes details on the 16 contract solicitations we will issue from now through the end of the project. You'll remember that work groups, Governing State leads, and vendors reviewed the work plan in July at a meeting in Denver. The plan that resulted from that meeting includes timelines for 95 "Level 1" activities that encompass significant work efforts, most of which will be accomplished through contracts with various service providers.

Following that meeting, we worked to group relevant tasks together to articulate a coherent procurement process. Our goal was to bundle tasks that are similar, or have strong interdependencies, into manageable RFPs that will generate well-crafted, competitive proposals. Releasing the procurement schedule will provide prospective vendors with a clear understanding of the scope and timeline for the Consortium's procurements over the next three years.

Before the end of the calendar year, we will develop similar work plans and procurement schedules for the interim assessment and the formative practices/professional development components of our overall design.

The work plans and procurement schedules, resulting from the hard work and dedication of close to a hundred work group members from our states, provide tangible evidence that the Consortium is on track to deliver a fully functional assessment system by the 2014-15 school year. JW

Announcements

Mathematics content specifications—The first draft of the SMARTER Balanced mathematics content specifications is now available for review. Feedback is due by 11:59 p.m. (Pacific) on Monday, September 19. A revised draft will be released in October. Instructions for both individual reviewers and groups on

how to provide feedback through online surveys are included with the materials posted at <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Resources.aspx>.

State membership changes—South Dakota has officially become a Governing State for the Consortium.

Work group name change—The “Formative Processes and Tools/Professional Development” Work Group has changed its name to the “Formative Assessment Practices and Professional Learning” Work Group, to better describe the work group’s function and capacity.

Work group EC liaison changes—In order to accommodate increasing responsibilities as executive director and provide leadership for all 10 work groups, Joe Willhoft will be turning EC liaison duties for the Test Design Work Group over to Carissa Miller. Michael Hock will now be the EC liaison for the Accessibility and Accommodations Work Group.

Upcoming Events

Advisory States meeting—Advisory State leads: Due to the Labor Day holiday, the September Advisory States meeting will be held on Monday, September 12, at 11 a.m. (Pacific). Please see separate email for agenda and webinar information.

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.

Resources

Computer adaptive testing fact sheet—An overview of computer adaptive testing is now available at <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Resources.aspx>.

Mathematics content specifications webinar recording—The recording and presentation from the August 29 webinar on the draft mathematics content specifications are now available at <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Resources.aspx>.

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.

Is the Consortium committed to using the Accessible Portable Item Profile (APIP) as the accessibility and interoperability standard for the assessment system?

SMARTER Balanced has not yet adopted an interoperability standard. Over the next several weeks, the Consortium will be working with Measured Progress—the winner of the information technology systems architecture RFP—to determine which standard represents the best approach. We are fully committed to identifying and using the best new accessibility technologies and research-based accommodations to provide the broadest range of students with a meaningful and successful assessment experience.

In addition, the Accessibility and Accommodations Work Group will release an RFP later this month to conduct an extensive review of research and promising practices used in the current generation of state

assessments. This information will be used by the Accessibility and Accommodations Work Group, in collaboration with national experts on students with special assessment needs (including English language learners), to plan an array of accessibility options and accommodations that will be available when the new tests are implemented during the 2014-15 school year. The following are already included in our assessment development plans:

- Translations—SMARTER Balanced plans to translate its tests into five languages, including Spanish, American Sign Language, and the three other languages most commonly used across Consortium states.
- Accessibility by design—Because the Consortium’s tests will be administered by computer, it will be possible to design tests that can make available an array of accessibility tools and technologies at the individual item and task level—a vast improvement over many current tests that address students with special assessment needs as an afterthought.
- Universal Design—Test design and item development will adhere to principles of universal design, including procedures to simplify language demands that are not relevant to the construct(s) being measured.

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SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd—Project Management Partner

sbac@wested.org

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