SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

SBAC Weekly Update

Issue 34

Week ending Friday, September 23, 2011

Top News This Week

- Delaware becomes a Governing State
- The System Architecture Workshops have begun
- Revised ELA/literacy content specifications are available for review until Tuesday, September 27
- The Sustainability Task Force is seeking nominations for Higher Education representatives

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 Delaware as the newest Governing State in the Consortium. Since the award of the Race to the Top assessment grant a year ago, Delaware has played an important role in SMARTER Balanced, with representatives on the Test Design, Reporting, and Validation and Psychometrics Work Groups. In the coming years, Delaware's recent experience launching a new computer adaptive test and using interim assessment information to inform instruction in the classroom will provide valuable insights for our work.

This week also marked the first of three intensive workshops to develop the technology architecture for the assessment system. Members of the Formative Assessment Practices, Item Development, Performance Tasks, Reporting, Technology Approach, and Validation and Psychometrics Work Groups gathered in Chicago to discuss how different audiences—including students, teachers, administrators, parents, and others—will interact with the various components of the assessment system.

Based on these workshops, the vendor team will develop a set of user profiles and flow diagrams to ensure that the assessment system meets the needs of the Consortium. At the end of October, member states and vendors will have an opportunity to review and provide feedback on these documents to make sure we are on the right track. Following this review, the team will design detailed specifications and technology governance structures, and recommend interoperability standards.

Getting the system architecture right is essential. Just as an architect drafts a blueprint for a house showing the number of rooms and how they are arranged, the system architect will describe the requirements of the various technology components and how they fit together. And just as a team of contractors constructs a house based on the blueprint, subsequent vendors will be guided by the system

architecture as they develop the technology platforms of the assessment system, including the item authoring bank, test delivery system, reporting system, and digital library of formative assessment practices and resources for teachers. JW

Announcements

State membership changes—Delaware has officially become a Governing State in the Consortium.

System Architecture Workshops have begun—The IT Systems Architecture vendor held the first week of our three-week Architecture Workshop series. This past week focused on the areas of machine and distributed scoring, reporting, dashboards, and portals. The workshops will continue next week, covering the areas of item authoring, item banking, digital library, and interoperability standards. The final workshops will occur the week of October 11th and will cover test creation, test delivery platform adaptive testing, and integration framework. Members will have the opportunity to review the initial workshop deliverables via webinar-based showcases in the latter half of October. Additional details and information will follow.

Revised English Language Arts/Literacy Content Specifications available for review—The revised content specifications for English language arts/literacy are now available for review. Stakeholders will have until 11:59 p.m. (Pacific) Tuesday, September 27, to submit feedback through an online survey. The final ELA/literacy content specifications will be posted in October. The ELA/literacy content specifications materials are available at: http://www.smarterbalanced.org/Resources.aspx.

SBAC Sustainability Task Force—Chiefs and State Leads: The date for nominations has been extended to Wednesday, September 28, and the task force has been expanded to include two representatives from Higher Education. The task force will develop a series of recommendations regarding how states will procure, administer, and maintain the SBAC system after the federal grant ends in October 2014. The task force's recommendations will guide future SBAC governance as well as provide states with a budget and procurement roadmap to prepare for the 2014 administration of the SBAC system. Nominations for participation on the task force should be sent to sbac@wested.org.

Upcoming Events

Governing States meeting—Governing State leads: The next meeting of the Consortium's Governing States will occur on Tuesday, September 27, at 10 a.m. (Pacific). Please see separate email for agenda and webinar information.

Work Group Co-Chairs meeting—Work Group Co-Chairs: The next meeting of the Work Group Co-Chairs will occur on Friday, September 30, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. (Pacific). Please see separate email for agenda and webinar information.

Chiefs meeting—Chiefs and State Leads: The next meeting of the member state Chiefs will occur on Monday, October 3, at 1 p.m. (Pacific). Note that this is one week later than the normally scheduled meetings on the last Monday of the month. Please see separate email for agenda and webinar information.

Resources

Summative Assessment Work Plan documents released—The Consortium has posted the Summative Assessment Master Work Plan and Procurement Schedule on the Consortium's external website. These documents provide details on the Consortium's major activities and contract solicitations during the life of the project: http://www.smarterbalanced.org/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.

How will SMARTER Balanced assessments be delivered? Will each state be required to contract with a vendor, or will the Consortium contract with a single or multiple vendors?

In order to preserve flexibility for states, we expect that there will be multiple procurement options available for the assessment system. These options may include a Consortium purchase model, individual state procurements from vendors, individual states hosting their own systems, regional procurement consortia, and states as prime customers that allow other states to buy-in to their contract (e.g., piggybacking). Further, the Consortium may allow more than one vendor to provide the same services to create competition that will reduce cost and increase quality.

The IT systems architecture work that began this week will help define what is possible from a technology standpoint for both test delivery (e.g., presentation of items to students and receiving student responses) and hosting the test delivery software. The Sustainability Task Force will provide recommendations on which procurement and delivery models to pursue. Ultimately, Governing States will make the final decisions, considering state needs, economies of scale, comparability, and efficiency.

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SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

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