

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

SBAC Weekly Update

Issue 35

Week ending Friday, September 30, 2011

Top News This Week

- Jacqueline King named director of higher education collaboration
- Governing States to receive a second year of membership in ICCS collaborative
- Release of final ELA/Literacy Content Specifications delayed

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. Break out the birthday cake because tomorrow, October 1, marks the one-year anniversary of the Consortium. If SMARTER Balanced were an infant, we might be cutting our first teeth, but our developmental milestones are happening even faster. We have built a solid foundation for the assessment system, as well as a strong organization to support this work. As I reflect on our progress over the past year, I am struck by the dedication of our 29 member states that have made an ongoing commitment to support a collaborative development process during a time of enormous economic stress. Our project is truly unprecedented, and I want to recognize the hard work that has brought us to this point.

In just a year, the Consortium organized 10 work groups that developed a summative assessment work plan and issued six contract solicitations. We engaged leading experts as part of our TAC and advisory groups. A top notch executive team—including Tony Alpert, Linda Darling-Hammond, Sue Gendron, Marty McCall, and our newest hire, Jacqueline King, who will direct higher education outreach—is helping us move even faster. Additional foundation funding is supporting efforts beyond the scope of our original application. Consortium representatives have delivered presentations at more than 100 events and conferences—an average of about two per week.

Most importantly, we have accomplished all of this while remaining true to the values we started with: a commitment to transparent state-led governance, evidence-based decision making, and a focus on supporting the needs of educators. We will continue to make key products—like the work plans and content specifications—available for review by both internal partners and external stakeholders.

I know that greater challenges lie ahead. By early next year, the Consortium will have 14 vendor contracts under way, representing the most intensive part of the development phase of the assessment system. We will also bring on new talent, including a communications director, stakeholder outreach director, and content specialists in ELA and math. And our Sustainability Task Force, which convenes this fall, will develop recommendations to guide the structure of the Consortium after September 2014.

Thank you to all who have made this first year such a success. I look forward to the year ahead. JW

Announcements

Jacqueline King Named Director of Higher Education Collaboration—Jacqueline King will lead the Consortium's outreach to institutions of higher education. Previously, Jaci was assistant vice president and policy research advisor at the American Council on Education. She also was the founding director of ACE's Center for Policy Analysis. An expert in higher education access, student financial aid, and alignment with K-12, Jaci will help ensure that the SMARTER Balanced assessments meet the needs of postsecondary institutions for determining student readiness for entry-level credit-bearing courses in mathematics and English language arts. Engaging higher education leaders and faculty in the Consortium's work will support the successful implementation of Common Core State Standards and SMARTER Balanced assessments, as well as strengthen linkages between K-12 schools and postsecondary institutions. Jaci holds a doctorate in higher education from the University of Maryland, College Park. She will begin work with the Consortium on October 24.

ICCS Membership—Governing States will receive a second year of membership in the Implementing the Common Core Standards (ICCS) state collaborative through continuation of a special agreement with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The Executive Committee is discussing whether or not membership for Advisory States can also be extended beyond the original one year agreement. Membership includes travel, hotel, and per-diem costs for six representatives from each state to attend three ICCS meetings per year. The 2011-2012 ICCS membership year will run from October 1, 2011, to September 30, 2012. The next meeting of ICCS will be December 5-7, 2011, in San Diego, California. State leads will receive an email from the PMP with additional details.

System Architecture Workshops Update—The IT Systems Architecture vendor held the second week of our three-week Architecture Workshop series. This past week focused on the areas of item authoring, item banking, digital library, and interoperability standards. The final workshops will occur the week of October 10 and will cover test creation, test delivery platform adaptive testing, and the 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.

ELA/Literacy Content Specifications—The release of the final version of the English language arts/literacy content specifications, originally scheduled for October 4, will be delayed. The additional time will allow the Consortium to thoughtfully respond to the feedback received during two rounds of review and ultimately create a stronger document. The revised release date will follow.

Upcoming Events

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.

Governing States meeting—Governing State leads: The next meeting of the Consortium's Governing States will occur on Tuesday, October 11, at 10 a.m. (Pacific). 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.

As the Consortium issues additional RFPs and engages vendors over the next few months, how will oversight of the contracts be managed?

Consistent with our approach to date, Consortium work groups will function as the first line of oversight over vendors. Work group co-chairs will work with their PMP liaison regarding day-to-day operations. Work groups can consult with the chief operating officer if they require assistance on critical issues of RFPs, budgets, logistics, or other support around implementation. Questions regarding substantive policy will be directed to the Executive Committee through the executive director, when appropriate. Large policy issues will most likely be taken to Governing States for review. The State of Washington will continue to ensure that RFPs, contracts, and resulting deliverables are aligned and produced in a manner that is consistent with its procurement rules and best practices.

To assist work groups, we are planning twice-yearly convenings beginning in early 2012 where work group members can meet with vendors and collaborate with each other. Additional information about the first meeting will be available shortly.

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SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

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