

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

SBAC Weekly Update

Issue 39

Week ending Friday, October 28, 2011

Top News This Week

- Systems Architecture Workshop showcase to be held on October 31
- RFP posted for Test Specifications and Blueprints and CAT Specifications
- Stakeholder research is underway

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 SMARTER Balanced 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. With the school year in full swing, educators across the country are developing plans to implement the Common Core State Standards. I wanted to share two recent studies that provide more information about the rigor of the standards and how they are perceived among teachers and the public.

First, a report from the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) found that the Common Core held up well in comparison to five sets of college- and career-ready standards. Researchers found "substantial concurrence" in terms of rigor and breadth between the Common Core and the comparison standards. The full report is available online here: <https://www.epiconline.org/files/pdf/LiningUp-FullReport.pdf>. Dr. David Conley, EPIC's CEO, is a member of the Consortium's Technical Advisory Committee.

Next, a new opinion research study found that there is strong support among the public and teachers for consistent standards and assessments. While specific awareness of the Common Core is low among the public, more than two-thirds of teachers have heard "a lot" or "some" about the Common Core—and among those, nearly 60% have a favorable impression of the standards. Released by Achieve, the full report is available online here: <http://www.achieve.org/PublicPerceptionCCSS>.

SMARTER Balanced is committed to assisting member states with the transition to the Common Core. As part of our supplemental grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the Consortium is providing resources and tools for states, including membership in CCSSO's Implementing the Common Core Standards (ICCS) collaborative.

In addition, the Transition to the Common Core Work Group is working to identify what types of professional development and topics will be essential for a successful implementation of the standards in every classroom. The Formative Assessment Practices and Professional Learning Work Group is designing a digital library that will also support local professional development plans and provide access for teachers to curricular and assessment resources aligned to the Common Core.

Providing educators with the resources and training to implement the Common Core is critical—not only for the implementation of the SMARTER Balanced assessment system, but also to ensure that students acquire the knowledge and skills to succeed in college and career. JW

Announcements

Systems Architecture Workshop Showcase—Consortium members will have the opportunity to review the initial Systems Architecture Workshop deliverables via a webinar-based showcase on Monday, October 31, from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. (Pacific). The purpose of this meeting is to present the findings from the three SBAC Architecture Workshops held September through October, answer any questions, and provide a process for delivering feedback on the documentation and materials presented. Please refer to a recent email from sbac@wested.org for webinar details.

RFP 09 for the Test Specifications and Blueprints and CAT Specifications has been released to vendors—Proposals are due Wednesday, November 23. The Consortium is seeking a contractor to develop test specifications, blueprints, Computer Adaptive Test (CAT) specifications, and conduct initial CAT simulation studies. The RFP is now available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/Jobs-Contracts.aspx>.

Stakeholder Research—Hart Research is working with the Consortium's communications contractor, GMMB, to learn more about the needs of states as they implement the Common Core State Standards and aligned assessment systems. In the next few weeks, Hart Research will convene meetings with state education leaders and others. We encourage you to participate if you are contacted. Your insights will be extremely helpful as we seek to develop resources and tools to communicate our work.

RFP 05 for Psychometric Services has been released to vendors—Proposals are due Friday, November 7. The Consortium is seeking a contractor to provide quality psychometric services. The RFP is available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/Jobs-Contracts.aspx>.

Upcoming Events

Chiefs meeting—Chiefs and State Leads: The next meeting of the member state Chiefs will occur on Monday, October 31, at 1 p.m. (Pacific). Please see separate email for agenda and webinar information.

Advisory States meeting—Advisory State leads: The next meeting of the Consortium's Advisory States will occur on Monday, November 7, 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, November 8, at 10 a.m. (Pacific). Please see separate email for agenda and webinar information.

Resources

Collaboration website launch—Consortium members: A new internal collaboration website is being rolled out to Consortium members. The new website replaces the current internal website, and features extended capabilities such as calendar sharing and document collaboration. Please watch for emails from the Project Management Partner regarding new user IDs and passwords. The existing internal website will continue to be supported for the next few months to allow adequate time for all members to transition to the new Collaboration Site. Please contact sbac@wested.org with any questions or comments.

Relevant news items—State members: Weekly selections of news items relevant to the Consortium are available on the internal SMARTER Balanced 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 SMARTER Balanced website at <http://smarter.k12partners.org/content/sbac-weekly-update-archive>.

SMARTER Balanced meeting minutes—State members: Agendas and minutes from previously held meetings are available on the internal SMARTER Balanced 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.

Will SMARTER Balanced be developing end-of-course exams?

Our proposal did not include the development of end-of-course exams for the summative assessment. This design feature was settled upon by the Governing States as the proposal was being developed, and was arrived at after considerable discussion. In the final analysis, member states acknowledged that the high school assessments will carry significant stakes for individual high school students; namely, adequate performance on the assessment could grant direct access to credit-bearing courses in college. Member states agreed that the validity of the credit-access issue would best be supported if all students take the assessment at the end of 11th grade. Budget limitations could not support simultaneous development of an end-of-course summative system and the end-of-sequence model that was approved.

However, after the proposal was written and submitted, the U.S. Department of Education provided both consortia with a “supplemental” budget. We have used some of those resources for the development of software that will provide an end-of-course test-builder using the interim item bank.

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SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd—Project Management Partner

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