

## **SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium**

### **SBAC Weekly Update**

*Issue 40*

*Week ending Friday, November 4, 2011*

#### **Top News This Week**

- New All States bi-weekly meeting (consolidation of existing Governing States and Advisory States meetings)
- ESEA Waiver Request support
- IT Systems Architecture Showcase

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.

As of October 14, 2011, the Consortium has begun rolling out its new internal website and collaboration platform, powered by Google Apps for Education, which will replace the current internal website. During this transition, please note that embedded links in the Update sometimes direct you to both internal SMARTER Balanced websites, available only to Consortium members. If you are a state employee in a Consortium state and need access to material on these websites, please contact [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org).

#### **From the Executive Director**

Greetings. We are now in the middle of determining our IT systems architecture, and are reviewing the information gathered at the three workshops held in September and October. During these workshops, representatives from the Consortium's work groups and technical experts discussed the process for creating and delivering the assessments from beginning to end to ensure that different technology platforms and databases work together and meet the needs of a wide variety of users.

Now that the workshops are complete, member states and work groups will have three opportunities to give feedback on the architecture documents as they are created and revised. In addition, our IT systems architecture contractor, Measured Progress, will be reaching out to relevant membership and trade associations to solicit feedback on the Consortium's emerging IT systems architecture.

The first review period concluded this week and focused on a consolidation of the documents and information gathered during the three workshops. Documents included a summary of user goals and functional requirements, as well as flow diagrams for each portion of the assessment system.

There are two upcoming review periods—one in mid-November and a second in early-December. Measured Progress will hold webinars during each period to provide an overview of the systems architecture documents and to answer any questions. Information about upcoming webinars and access to documentation will be made available via email.

I encourage Consortium members to participate in this review process. It's critical for charting a successful course for the IT infrastructure and overall development of the assessment system. JW

#### **Announcements**

All States meeting (NEW)—State leads: Starting in November, the individual meetings for Governing and Advisory States will be combined into a single bi-weekly "All States" meeting held on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month. The Executive Committee recently decided to implement this change both to cut down on the number of meetings, and to keep our Advisory States more up to date with Consortium activities. Of course, policy decisions requiring a vote will still be acted upon by the Governing States.

The previously scheduled Advisory States call on Monday, November 7, is canceled and all state leads will be invited to join the new All States meetings to begin on Tuesday, November 8, at 10 a.m. (Pacific).

IT Systems Architecture Showcase—On October 31, Consortium members were presented with the findings from the three SBAC Systems Architecture Workshops held September through October and provided the opportunity to submit feedback through Friday, November 4. Revisions and enhancements to the architecture deliverables are underway and the next opportunity for Consortium member review will be in mid-November.

ESEA Flexibility Waiver support—State Chiefs and State Leads: A document designed to support SMARTER Consortium states applying for ESEA Flexibility is now available. The document is specifically designed to support a state's answer to question 1.C "Develop and Administer Annual, Statewide, Aligned, High-Quality Assessments That Measure Student Growth" and could be included in its entirety as a complete document or a state could use portions of the document for their application. Please note that the third paragraph of the document must be updated with specific state information including the state's role in the Consortium. The document is available on the internal SMARTER Balanced websites at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/document-library> and <http://smarter.k12partners.org/content/document-library>. If you require a copy of your state's signed Memorandum of Understanding, an electronic scan can be sent via email to the SBAC state lead within 24 hours of receiving the request.

Stakeholder Research—The Consortium has asked its communications contractor, GMMB, to work with Hart Research to learn more about the needs of states as they transition to the Common Core State Standards and prepare to implement an aligned assessment system. In the next few weeks, Hart Research will be contacting education leaders in our states seeking volunteers to participate in meetings and conversations about this important topic. Your insights will be extremely helpful as we develop resources and tools to help states communicate about our collective efforts.

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 available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/Jobs-Contracts.aspx>.

### **Upcoming Events**

All States meeting (NEW)—Governing State and Advisory State leads: The next conduct of the All States meeting will occur on Tuesday, November 8, at 10 a.m. (Pacific). Please see separate email for agenda and webinar information.

Advisory States meeting (CANCELED)—Advisory State leads: The previously scheduled Advisory States meeting on Monday, November 7, has been canceled. Please see separate email for the new All States meeting agenda and webinar information.

### **Resources**

Collaboration website launch—Consortium members: A new internal collaboration website is being rolled out to all 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 month to allow adequate time for all members to transition to the new Collaboration Site. Please contact [sbac@wested.org](mailto: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 websites at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/communications/news-archive> and <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 websites at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/communications/weekly-update-archive> and <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 websites at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/meetings> and <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](mailto:sbac@wested.org).

*With the rapid growth of tablet computing in the last two years, many school districts are considering handheld devices as replacements for laptops or even printed textbooks. Will SMARTER Balanced support the delivery of interim and summative assessments on tablets in addition to computers?*

There's no doubt that tablets and other WiFi-enabled computing devices offer school districts a broader range of technology options for students and teachers. While tablets, e-readers, and smartphones are developing rapidly—both in functionality and processing power—today's products present challenges for delivering an online assessment.

Consider the security of test items: At this time, almost all applications used by tablets differ from computer-based software with regard to capturing images from the screen. Testing software used by computers typically shuts down keyboard commands, such as “print screen” and “copy,” to ensure test security. Tablet applications don't currently have this capability, meaning that snapshots of items could be saved to a photo album! While security-sensitive applications may be developed in the near future, the Consortium must begin developing and testing our software in only a few months.

At a CCSSO-sponsored Assessment Interoperability Advisory Forum, held last week, there was great interest among both assessment consortia in tablet administration. We will continue to monitor the progress of applications that enable alternatives to traditional computers to be “assessment ready.”

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### **SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium**

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