

## **SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium**

### **SBAC Weekly Update**

*Issue 44*

*Week ending Friday, December 9, 2011*

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

- Revised Mathematics Content Specifications available for review through January 3
- Eddie Arnold, APR, named director of strategic communications and PIO
- IT Systems Architecture showcase of Architectural Design on December 16
- Architecture Review Board nomination process is open through December 15
- RFP posted for the Item Authoring and Item Pool application

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.

Please note that embedded links in the Update sometimes direct readers to the Consortium's internal website, 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). For the next month, links are included to both the new Collaboration Site and the prior internal website. Starting in December 2011, the prior internal website will be retired.

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

Greetings. This week, members of the Consortium gathered in San Diego for CCSSO's Implementing the Common Core System collaborative. This session focused on bridging the gap between K-12 and higher education, and states were encouraged to invite a higher education representative. Jaci King participated in a breakout session (along with Charlie Lenth from SHEEO, who serves on the Consortium's Executive Committee) on the Consortium's approach to higher education engagement, and Tony Alpert provided an overview of our progress to participants.

The meeting also included plenty of time for state teams to collaborate with their coaches, who are provided to each state as part of the Consortium-sponsored collaborative, on implementation plans and stakeholder engagement. The ICCS meetings continue to be well-attended, and the Consortium is underwriting a second year of membership in ICCS for all Governing States.

Next week marks the third meeting of the Consortium's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). As in the past, we are making the meeting available to member states via a live conference feed. We will discuss our work to dive deeper into the validity framework for the assessment system, plus issues related to the Content Specifications and alignment to the Common Core, our approach to scaling, and the plan for the development of items and tasks for the pilot test.

Our TAC includes some of the nation's leading experts in technology, student assessment and accountability, and other technical disciplines crucial to effective assessment systems. Members provide essential guidance about the design of the assessments. Their input is especially important as we look toward the start of item and test development.

Finally, I'm pleased to welcome an important addition to the SMARTER Balanced staff. Eddie Arnold, APR, is joining us as director of strategic communications and public information officer. Eddie will be a tremendous asset to the Consortium, and I look forward to his leadership and counsel. Throughout this process, I've been impressed with Eddie's inclusive approach and his commitment to improving education for all students. Additional information is available here:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/PressReleases.aspx>. JW

### **Announcements**

Revised Mathematics Content Specifications available for review—The revised Content Specifications for mathematics are available for a second round of review. Feedback is due by 11:59 p.m. Pacific time on Tuesday, January 3. Instructions on how to provide feedback through an online survey are included with the materials posted at: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/Resources.aspx>.

Eddie Arnold, APR, named director of strategic communications and PIO—Eddie will oversee internal and external communications and collaborate with the Consortium's communications service provider, GMMB. Eddie will also represent SMARTER Balanced with national partners and federal policymakers. He begins immediately and will be based in Washington, DC. His email address is [eddiea@ccsso.org](mailto:eddiea@ccsso.org).

IT Systems Architecture update—This week marked the end of the IT Systems Architecture Phase I Informal Review Period that took place December 2–7 and the beginning of the Phase I Final Review Period from December 9–13. This will be the last review before the Phase I final deliverables are presented.

IT Systems Architecture Showcase on December 16—Measured Progress will be providing an overview of the Phase I final version of the Architectural Design deliverables via a webinar-based showcase on Friday, December 16, from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. Pacific time. We strongly encourage participation from state information technology (IT) staff. Please expect a reminder email for this event on December 15, which will include a link to materials, agenda, and webinar access details.

Architecture Review Board (ARB) nominations update—Nominations for ARB members are due by December 15. Reminder emails for nominations were sent on December 8 to state leads requesting the nomination of a K-12 Chief Information Officer or Chief Technology Officer to serve on the ARB. Selected members will support the ongoing implementation and enhancement phase of the IT Systems Architecture initiative. This group will represent the interests of member states in the decision-making and prioritization process with regard to the Systems Architecture. The ARB nomination process began on December 1. Member selection begins December 15, and notification of seats will be announced January 5.

The RFP for the Item Authoring and Item Pool (RFP 07) application has been released to vendors—Proposals are due Wednesday, January 18. The Consortium is seeking to acquire and implement an application that can support item authoring and development activities as well as store and retrieve the pool of items available for use by the summative and interim assessment system. The RFP is available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/Jobs-Contracts.aspx>.

Summative assessment item specifications kick-off meeting conducted December 1–3—Work on the contract for RFP-04 Item Specifications began last week with a kick-off meeting in Phoenix on December 1–3, hosted by the contractors, Measured Progress and ETS. Key staff from these companies and co-chairs and work group members from Item Development, Performance Tasks, and Accessibility and

Accommodations participated in the three-day meeting. Linda Darling-Hammond, Nikki Elliott-Schuman, and Shelbi Cole presented the latest drafts of the ELA/Literacy and Mathematics Content Specifications claims and targets, which will define the evidence needed to inform the development of item specifications. Measured Progress and ETS staff described their plans for ensuring the item specifications meet Consortium requirements in the timeframe allotted. At the end of the meeting, content-specific breakout sessions were held between Consortium members and contractor staff to help focus the work ahead. The group left the meeting with commitments to weekly meetings and progress updates to ensure an iterative development process that involves Consortium input at early stages in the process.

**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 conducting an online survey in member states. Participants will be contacted via email. These insights will be extremely helpful as we develop resources and tools to help states communicate about our collective efforts.

### **Upcoming Events**

**All States meeting—Governing State and Advisory State Leads:** The next All States meeting will occur on Tuesday, December 13, at 10 a.m. Pacific time. Please see separate email for agenda and webinar information.

**TAC meeting**—The third meeting of the SMARTER Balanced Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will occur on December 14–15, 2011, in San Francisco, CA. Please see separate email for agenda and webinar information.

**Sustainability Task Force—Chiefs and State Leads:** The SMARTER Balanced Sustainability Task Force will meet December 16 in San Francisco. Task force members 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.

### **Resources**

**Education Week webinar**—Joe Willhoft participated in an Education Week webinar on common assessments on November 29. The webinar included a presentation from both assessment consortia and questions from participants around the country. The event is archived online at <https://event.on24.com/eventRegistration/EventLobbyServlet?target=registration.jsp&eventid=370968&sessionid=1&key=86978867D1A9B0F98354C2CEB8CA429A>.

**Collaboration Site launch**—Consortium members: The new internal Collaboration Site has been fully launched. The new website replaces the current internal website and features extended capabilities, such as calendar sharing and document collaboration. 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. You should have already received access information that includes your username and password. If you have not received your login details, or are having trouble logging into the site, please contact [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org).

**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 SMARTER Balanced state lead within 24 hours of receiving the request.

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).

How will SMARTER Balanced ensure comparability of scores with PARCC?

The U.S. Department of Education grant requires that scores on the assessments be comparable **within** each consortium, but is silent on comparability **across** consortia. Nevertheless, both PARCC and SMARTER Balanced are committed to working together to ensure that proficiency standards and data from the respective assessment systems will be comparable and portable across the grades. However, comparability also raises a host of both technical and policy issues, such as whether comparability is at the total score level, or also at the sub-score level. To address these issues, both consortia will be forming a joint Technical Advisory Committee, which will include both technical and policy experts, to study cross-consortia comparability. Our lead psychometrician, Marty McCall, will be closely involved with this work, in partnership with Governing States and Chiefs.

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### **SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium**

WestEd—Project Management Partner

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