

## **SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium**

### **SBAC Weekly Update**

*Issue 46*

*Week ending Friday, January 6, 2012*

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

- Item Specifications Showcase January 4, 2012
- Work Group/Contractor Collaboration Conference scheduled for February 9–11 in San Antonio

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).

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

Greetings. I hope you had a safe and happy New Year. January is already off to a busy start for the Consortium, and I wanted to take this opportunity to preview some of the milestones ahead.

In the last Weekly Update, I reviewed the status of our procurements. We expect to finalize several contracts this month, including: RFP-05 Psychometric Services; RFP-06 Accessibility and Accommodations Policy Guidelines; RFP-08 Item/Task Materials Development; and RFP-09 Test and CAT Specifications. That will bring the total number of active contracts related to the summative assessment to seven.

In January, we expect to announce a full roster of Higher Education Leads from member states. These leads will serve as a central point of contact for their states and seek input from a variety of higher education stakeholders. They will also nominate individuals to serve on Consortium work groups. Jaci King is already engaged with the Higher Education Leads and has kicked off important discussions about how students can demonstrate college readiness through the assessment system.

Later this month, in collaboration with PARCC, we will provide additional information about the IT readiness tool. This tool will be critical in supporting states and local education agencies for evaluating current technology and infrastructure in the transition to online assessments.

Finally, we concluded the second round of review for the math content specifications earlier this week. Thank you to member states, partners, and interested stakeholders who submitted valuable feedback to inform the document.

Governing States will soon vote on claims for the English language arts/literacy content specifications and math will follow shortly thereafter. As I've mentioned before, the claims represent a summation of what students must demonstrate in each content domain and establish, at a minimum, the Consortium-endorsed score reporting categories. Approval of the claims in ELA/literacy and math is an important step forward for the overall development of the assessment system.

While the pace of our work has accelerated in the past few months, we will continue to look for additional opportunities for input and feedback from our member states and partners in the year ahead. Here's to a productive and successful 2012. JW

#### **Announcements**

Item Specifications Showcase—This week Measured Progress and ETS provided a walkthrough of the draft Item Specifications via a webinar-based showcase. Showcase 1 included state leads and work group members, and was provided to collect early feedback on planned solutions and preliminary drafts of the following: ELA and Mathematics Item Specifications and Sample Items, Technology-Enhanced and Performance Task Specifications, Accessibility and Accommodations Guidelines, Style Guide, Stimulus Specifications, and Bias and Sensitivity Guidelines Update. Two additional showcases are planned for late January and mid-February.

Following the showcase for Consortium members by Measured Progress and ETS, we hosted an open invitation webinar for the vendor community to review the progress made in the development of item specifications and guidelines.

An additional webinar was held that provided an overview of the Consortium’s procurement process, changes in the procurement schedule, and information on aspects of proposals submitted to date that best addressed Consortium needs. Both of these webinars were recorded and will be posted early next week at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org>.

### **Upcoming Events**

Work Group/Contractor Collaboration Conference—A meeting will take place February 9–11 in San Antonio, Texas, in coordination with CCSSO SCASS meetings, to facilitate collaboration between SBAC work groups and recently engaged Consortium contractors. The purpose of this meeting is three-fold: 1) to afford work groups and contractors the opportunity for face-to-face planning; 2) to allow work group leadership to collaborate both within and among work groups; and 3) to convene all state leads and work group co-chairs to discuss design and implementation issues and overall progress of the project. CCSSO will be coordinating travel accommodations and will provide more details in the coming weeks.

### **Resources**

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 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 website at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/communications/news-archive>

Prior versions of the Weekly Update—State members: Previous SBAC Weekly Updates are available on the internal SMARTER Balanced website at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/communications/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

<https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/meetings>

### **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).

*As currently written, the ELA/literacy content specifications do not address the foundational reading standards for K–5. Will the formative assessments include assessments for these standards for K–5?*

The summative, end-of-year assessments used for accountability purposes will not include items or tasks aligned to the K–5 “foundational” reading standards (i.e., print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, and fluency). The interim assessments also will not assess these foundational skills because, as described in our proposal to the U.S. Department of Education, the interim assessments are designed to be aligned to and on the same scale as the summative assessments. The foundational skills are so distinctly different from the ELA standards in reading, writing, listening and speaking, and language that it is hard to imagine that interim items and tasks could be aligned with and drawn onto the summative scale.

Formative processes and practices is a place where we might be able to provide support for the assessment of foundational reading skills. The Formative Assessment Practices and Professional Learning Work Group will coordinate with member states to identify the need for tools and other supports that cover the entire range of the Common Core State Standards, including K–5 foundational reading skills. Even though we may be able to provide support for foundational reading standards through formative assessment activities, it’s important to keep in mind that our formative resources are not intended to be Consortium-developed “tests.” The experts with whom we have been working all remind us that “formative assessment” should not be viewed as a catalog of tests, but should instead be seen as a resource that teachers and instructional leaders can use to develop high-quality assessments for use in day-to-day instruction.

### **SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium**

WestEd—Project Management Partner

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