

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

SBAC Weekly Update

Issue 47

Week ending Friday, January 13, 2012

Top News This Week

- Students with Disabilities Advisory Committee—Open solicitation for nominees
- ELA/Literacy Claims Vote
- Hewlett Foundation Assessment Prize
- Bias and Sensitivity Guidelines Showcase
- Fourth Quarter Project Report Available

The SMARTER Balanced 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.

From the Executive Director

Greetings. On Monday, we will celebrate the life of one of our nation's greatest champions of equality and justice for all, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It is an opportunity for us to reflect on our nation's education challenge: to create an educational system that will ensure that every child—regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, economic status, or background—is prepared to succeed in college and career. This is the goal of the Common Core State Standards and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium.

As a Consortium, we are working to develop a high-quality, balanced assessment aligned to the Common Core. Our work is guided by a commitment to improving teaching and learning—and ultimately helping to prepare all students for college and the workplace. JW

Announcements

Students with Disabilities Advisory Committee—Solicitation for Nominees—Member state leads: Nominations are being accepted from member states for experts to join the SMARTER Balanced Students with Disabilities Advisory Committee (SWDAC). The committee will assist the work groups and other Consortium efforts by providing guidance on how to develop accessible assessments for all students. Please give consideration to individuals in academic positions and/or leadership roles in advocacy organizations whose areas of interest include the assessment of students with disabilities. State leads should refer to the email distributed on January 11 for instructions on submitting nominations, which are due by January 24, 2012.

ELA/Literacy Claims Vote—Governing State Leads: Voting on ELA/literacy claims opened on January 11 and will close on January 18. The SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium Content Specifications for ELA/literacy have been through two rounds of review and extensive revisions and editing based on the feedback from states and organizations. These claims will serve as the basis for essential assessment development decisions, such as test design and reporting categories.

Hewlett Foundation Assessment Prize—On January 9, 2012, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation announced that it will award a \$100,000 prize to the designers of software that can reliably automate the grading of essays for state tests. The "Automated Student Assessment Prize" ("Prize") competition is being supported by both SMARTER Balanced and PARCC and is intended to begin to solve the problem of the high cost and the slow turnaround resulting from the time-consuming and expensive task of hand-scoring thousands of essays for standardized tests.

The competition will be conducted in two phases. The first will demonstrate the capabilities of existing vendors who create and market software for grading essays. The second phase will be open to the public and will award prize money to competitors who demonstrate software that can score essays as well as human graders. The vendor demonstration will be completed in January with the open competition running through April to allow competitors time to develop new scoring algorithms. A public leader board will monitor progress. Refer to the Hewlett Foundation website for additional information about the competition: <http://www.hewlett.org/newsroom/press-release/hewlett-foundation-sponsors-prize-improve-automated-scoring-student-essays>.

Bias and Sensitivity Guidelines Showcase—This week Measured Progress and ETS hosted a showcase for state leads and work group members to collect early feedback on planned solutions and preliminary drafts of the Bias and Sensitivity Guidelines. Two upcoming showcases will provide the opportunity to review updated drafts and give final feedback.

Fourth Quarter Project Report Available—The quarterly project report for the period ending September 30, 2011 can be found at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/Resources.aspx>. The report details the Consortium's progress in key areas and provides updates for each work group.

Upcoming Events

Chiefs meeting—Chiefs and State Leads: The next meeting of the member state Chiefs will occur via webinar on Monday, January 30, at 1 p.m. (Pacific). Please see separate email for agenda and webinar information.

Chiefs In-Person meeting—Chiefs and State Leads: The next in-person meeting of the member state Chiefs will occur on Friday, February 24, in Denver. Please see separate emails from sbac@wested.org regarding logistical information.

Work Group/Contractor collaboration meeting, February 9–11—The registration announcement for the SMARTER Balanced Work Group/Contractor collaboration meeting has been released to eligible participants. CCSSO is assisting with travel arrangements while OSPI is coordinating rooming and venue details. The RSVP window closes on January 30, however early registration is strongly encouraged.

Resources

Collaboration Site—Consortium members: The Consortium uses an internal collaboration site, hosted by Google Docs to enable information sharing and collaboration among the member states. If you are a state employee in a Consortium state and need access to material on these websites, please contact 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.

One of our states writes: We have a few questions about the paper/pencil test that we may administer in 2015. We are receiving questions from our schools about not being ready for the online test but need some assistance in these questions before we decide one way or another.

1. *What is the turnaround time on scoring these tests?*
2. *How long will the Consortium provide the paper/pencil test?*
3. *How much will the paper/pencil test cost compared to the online test?*
4. *How will these paper/pencil tests be scored since they are not computer adaptive?*
5. *Can we really compare results from these two tests, since one is adaptive and one is not?*

SMARTER Balanced will make a paper-and-pencil administration option for the summative assessment available to states for three years following the launch of the assessment system (through 2016-17). The paper-and-pencil option is designed to help bridge the transition to online assessments for states where access to computers for test administration remains a challenge in 2014-15.

Consistent with the proposal to the U.S. Department of Education, any additional costs with the administration of the paper-and-pencil assessment will be borne by states electing to use this option. Both turnaround time for results and administration costs depend on several as yet unknown factors, including how much hand-scoring will be necessary. For example, costs would likely be lower—and turnaround faster—if constructed-response items can reliably be converted to a digital format and scored using the automated scoring engine. We will continue to keep states informed of the expected cost of the paper-and-pencil administration as the summative assessment is developed and field tested.

Regarding comparability, many states have used paper-and-pencil and online assessments side-by-side with little difference in the scaling of scores. The paper-and-pencil and CAT assessments will both adhere to the same blueprint, and we will verify the validity and comparability of the two tests during standard setting. While it is true that the CAT will assess a broader range of skills than the paper-and-pencil test, we fully expect that the overall scores will be comparable.

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd—Project Management Partner

sbac@wested.org