

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

SBAC Weekly Update

Issue 48

Week ending Friday, January 20, 2012

Top News This Week

- Item Specification Showcase 2
- Higher Education Leads Announced
- IT Systems Architecture Update
- Students with Disabilities Advisory Committee—Solicitation for Nominees

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. This week brought snow and ice to western Washington, closing schools and offices across the region. Nevertheless, our work continued uninterrupted, and I wanted to share two important updates.

I am pleased to report that we have now established higher education leads from member states. Jaci King will convene the higher education leads monthly, and these leads will help ensure that the Consortium receives input from a variety of higher education stakeholders as we develop the assessment system. A complete list of Consortium K-12 and higher education leads will be posted here:

<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/Contacts.aspx>. (If the page isn't updated right away, it is due to weather-related issues, and will be live very soon. Sorry if it's delayed.)

Next, we are looking forward to the first Work Group/Contractor Collaboration Conference February 9–11 in San Antonio, Texas. The idea for this event—which we plan to host twice yearly in connection with existing meetings—came out of a meeting in July with contractors and work groups to review the summative assessment master work plan. The opportunity to build relationships and share expertise in person proved invaluable.

As the development of the assessment system accelerates, we hope these conferences will improve coordination between work groups and contractors, as well as across all work groups. They will also provide dedicated time for state leads and work group co-chairs to discuss design and implementation issues and overall progress of the project. Invitations recently went out to invited participants for the February conference. A special thanks to Mike Middleton and his team for helping to organize this event, and to CCSSO for coordinating an extension to their previously-scheduled SCASS meetings. Please remember to RSVP by Monday, January 30. JW

Announcements

Item Specification Showcase 2—Member state leads and work group members: On January 26, Measured Progress and ETS will host a showcase for state leads and work group members to collect feedback on more elaborated 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. Please review separate emails for meeting details. One additional showcase is planned for mid-February.

Higher Education Leads Announced—The Consortium is pleased to announce the assignment of designated higher education leads from each of our member states. These state-specific higher

education leads will serve as central nodes of communication between the Consortium and institutions of higher education, will work closely with their state's SMARTER Balanced K-12 lead, and will nominate subject matter experts to support the work groups. This critical group is led by Jaci King, the SMARTER Balanced Director of Higher Education Collaboration, and convenes monthly. The Consortium is grateful to these higher education leaders for their service.

IT Systems Architecture Update—Measured Progress presented the Phase I final architectural design deliverables during the showcase meeting held on December 16, 2011. A PDF of these deliverables will be available on the OSPI site early next week.

Phase II began on December 26. This phase involves supporting the Architecture Review Board as it monitors the implementation of the SMARTER Balanced architecture and enhances the architecture as necessary to address issues that may arise as contractors build the Consortium's applications.

Architecture Review Board (ARB) Update—K-12 members have been selected based on nominations from member states. Members of the ARB will support the ongoing implementation and enhancement phase of the SMARTER Balanced IT systems architecture.

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.

Upcoming Events

Work Group/Contractor Collaboration Conference, February 9–11—The registration announcement for the SMARTER Balanced Work Group/Contractor Collaboration Conference on February 9–11, 2012, 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.

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.

Resources

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.

Report on Engaging Higher Education in New Assessments Available—A new report from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) identifies the conditions that can help build consensus between state K-12 and postsecondary systems. It also makes recommendations for meaningful involvement by higher education in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and assessments, which will inform our efforts to engage the postsecondary field. The report is available here: <http://www.nchems.org/pubs/detail.php?id=146>

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 website 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.

Will SMARTER Balanced allow the use of calculators on the summative and interim assessments?

No decision has yet been made on the use of calculators with the assessment system. We intend to work with member states, our Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and partners like the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics to inform our policy on the use of calculators.

This is a complex issue. One of the core tenets of the Common Core math standards is that students must develop mathematical fluency—speed and accuracy with simple calculations. On the other hand, the standards encourage students to use appropriate tools—including calculators—strategically when solving problems.

Fortunately, balancing these priorities is aided by our use of computer adaptive testing. We will be able to provide tools (or no tools, as the case may be) at the item level through the online interface. This not only assures that tools are appropriate to the task, it also levels the playing field so that students are not advantaged or disadvantaged by virtue of the sophistication of their calculators.

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd—Project Management Partner
sbac@wested.org