

## **SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium**

### **SBAC Weekly Update**

*Issue 49*

*Week ending Friday, January 27, 2012*

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

- Item Specifications showcase materials review
- Announcing Technology Readiness Tool contract
- State Technology Readiness Coordinator assignments
- Technology Readiness Tool webinar to be hosted by SETDA

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 this website, please contact [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org).

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

Greetings. This week, I had the opportunity to attend a meeting in Washington, DC, on the future of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The event brought together state assessment directors, NAEP coordinators, and other state representatives—including representatives from all 28 member states—for a strategic discussion about how NAEP will evolve over the next couple decades to reflect the changes in our education system, such as the Common Core and aligned assessments. While no decisions were made, the conversations and report-outs from the various breakouts provided important feedback to NAEP from the field for long-range planning.

This week also featured the President's State of the Union Address on Tuesday night. Education was a prominent part of the speech, with the President speaking about the importance of teachers, and proclaiming that "teachers matter."

The SMARTER Balanced Theory of Action is based on the idea that high-quality assessments can contribute to improved teaching and learning—and can ultimately help prepare all students to graduate high school college- and career-ready. Classroom teachers are at the center of a system of high-quality assessments, clear content standards and the delivery of instruction. We believe that a balanced system of assessments—that includes summative, interim, and formative components—can give teachers the feedback they need to monitor and adjust their instruction.

This is why we are developing instructional tools aligned to the Common Core and professional development on formative assessment tools and analyzing assessment results to determine next steps in instruction.

We are also committed to engaging with teachers in the design and scoring of assessments, including performance tasks. As we move into the large-scale development of items and pilot testing, teachers will provide valuable input to ensure that the assessment system supports their work with students in the classroom. JW

#### **Announcements**

Item Specifications Showcase materials review—At the Item Specifications Showcase 2 on January 26, current specifications and guidelines were presented and described. The review period for these materials is underway and will conclude Thursday, February 9. Educators will be able to review these materials and provide feedback through a survey. Details will be emailed to state leads during the week of January 30.

Announcing Technology Readiness Tool contract—SMARTER Balanced, in collaboration with PARCC, has contracted with Pearson to develop a Technology Readiness Tool to support states' planning as they transition to next-generation assessments to be launched beginning in 2014. This new open source tool assesses current capacity and compares that to the technology that will be needed to administer the new online assessments in four areas—devices, device to tester ratio, network infrastructure, and staff and personnel. The first of six data collection windows will be March 20 to May 14, 2012. The goal of the first data collection window is to collect easily accessible baseline data. Data collection will occur once each spring and fall through 2014. All states in the Consortium will be requested to use the tool to assess technology readiness during each window.

State Technology Readiness Coordinator assignments—In support of the technology readiness effort, we are requesting that each member state assign an individual or a team to fill the role of State Readiness Coordinator (SRC) by February 8, 2012 (Advisory States participating in both SMARTER Balanced and PARCC need only designate one individual or team). An email describing the qualifications and responsibilities of this role has been sent to state leads. This email also contains instructions on how to submit names and contact information. The Consortium and Pearson, along with the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA), will communicate with and provide training and support for the person or team assigned to this role.

Technology Readiness Tool webinar to be hosted by SETDA—The State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) is hosting a webinar at 2:00 p.m. (Eastern) / 11:00 a.m. (Pacific) on January 30 to provide additional information about the IT Readiness effort and answer any questions you may have. Please invite all state personnel who are interested in learning more about the tool. To access the webinar connection information, please go to [www.TinyURL.com/SRC-webinar2012](http://www.TinyURL.com/SRC-webinar2012).

### **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. CCSSO is making hotel arrangements for all registered participants and will provide hotel confirmation information next week.

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](mailto:sbac@wested.org) regarding logistical information.

### **Resources**

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 at <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 this website, 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 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](mailto:sbac@wested.org).

*What is the role of the State Readiness Coordinator (SRC) with the Technology Readiness Tool?*

Earlier this week, we distributed a note requesting that each state identify a single point of contact (or a small core team) that can serve as a state-level expert regarding IT Readiness. Each State Readiness Coordinator (SRC) will receive comprehensive information about the upcoming technology readiness survey and resources to assist districts and schools with data collection. With accurate information about technology gaps, SRCs can work with the Consortium to plan how to use the survey results.

It's important to note that this survey marks a critical milestone as part of the first phase of implementation of the assessment system. It also provides an opportunity to proactively address technology infrastructure, a major concern for districts and schools that goes far beyond assessments. We encourage you to find expertise beyond the boundaries of the assessment office that can provide the strategic technology leadership to help your districts and schools start to prepare their infrastructure for online assessments in 2014-15.

### **SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium**

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