

## **SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium**

### **SBAC Weekly Update**

*Issue 50*

*Week ending Friday, February 3, 2012*

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

- Opportunity to review Item Specifications and Guidelines
- Link to the Technology Readiness Tool webinar recording
- State Technology Readiness Coordinator assignments

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, we released draft Item Specifications and Guidelines for broad review and comment by LEA staff, teachers, partners, and interested stakeholders. I wanted to give Kevin King, Assessment Development Coordinator for the Utah State Office of Education and co-chair of the Item Development Work Group, an opportunity to provide a little more context for how this important work contributes to the development of the assessment system. Here's what Kevin has to say about our Item Specifications work:

"The Item/Task Specifications and Guidelines work is the link between the Content Specifications and the production of items and tasks. These are the tools that item/task writers and reviewers will use in the production of high-quality items/tasks that will allow the assessment system to measure the breadth and depth of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

"I picture the item/task specifications roughly as a "paint by numbers" guide for item development. There is enough structure so that the myriad items/tasks that need to be developed will be consistent in nature—and enough flexibility to allow for writer creativity so that the resulting bank of items and tasks will cover a range of variables, including depth of knowledge, difficulty, and topic.

"Along with the accompanying sample items/tasks, the specifications will provide sufficient detail about how to produce opportunities for students to present evidence of their knowledge, skills and abilities as related to the CCSS. Utilizing the principles of Evidence Centered Design, the specifications first identify acceptable evidence of understanding. Next, they describe task models that can be used to guide item/task development. And finally, sample items "give life" to the previous descriptions.

"In addition, the specifications describe necessary details for both the ELA/literacy and mathematics content areas, the range of item/task types (selected response, construction response, technology enhanced items, and performance tasks), stimulus specifications, as well as general specifications and content target specifications.

"The guidelines aspect of this work includes Bias and Sensitivity Guidelines, Accessibility and Accommodations Item/Task Guidelines, and Style Guide. These are the often unseen resources in item/task development that allow for consistency and fairness to be achieved across the item bank. They specify things such as what is appropriate and inappropriate content, when to bold or not bold words, what font size to use, etc.

"When I try to place this work into context, I imagine teachers sitting down to write test items and tasks,

reviewers reviewing items and tasks, and editors poring over these items and tasks. I imagine what they may need to accomplish their charge, and then I work to make sure the Item/Task Specifications and Guidelines will meet those purposes.

“Please contribute to the review of these documents as they are made available through showcases. A feedback survey will be open through February 9.”

I, too, encourage you to follow the link in the Announcement below to respond to Showcase 2 of our Item Specifications work. JW

### **Announcements**

Opportunity to review Item Specifications and Guidelines—LEA staff, teachers, vendors, and content organizations are invited to review the drafts of the SBAC item specifications and guidelines. The feedback will be captured via a survey hosted by SurveyMonkey. State leads are encouraged to reach out to districts and teachers as appropriate so that the item specifications may have broad review and input. Please refer to the email sent to the state leads from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org) on Monday, January 31, for additional instructions on engaging these individuals in this review. Feedback is due on or before February 9. The Showcase 2 materials may also be accessed by following the link: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/Resources.aspx> (under the SBAC 04 Showcase 2 header).

Link to the Technology Readiness Tool webinar recording—The State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) recently hosted a webinar on January 30 to provide additional information about the IT Readiness effort and answer questions. To access a recording of the webinar, please go to: <https://cisco.webex.com/ciscosales/lsr.php?AT=pb&SP=MC&rID=58072087&rKey=2b2bb44ed08bb516>.

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 was sent from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org) to state leads on Monday, January 23. 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.

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. The press release announcing the contract can be accessed by following the link: <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/PressReleases/TechReadinessTool.aspx>.

### **Upcoming Events**

Work Group/Contractor Collaboration Conference, February 9–11—The SMARTER Balanced conference will be held this upcoming week from February 9–11, 2012.

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).

*How will school districts be chosen to participate in the pilot test?*

In early 2013, a pilot test of the assessment system will be conducted in a sample of school districts to ensure technical adequacy and fairness of items and tasks to all student populations. The sampling plan for the pilot test will be developed in collaboration with member states and the contractor for RFP-19 Test Administration—expected to be selected this spring. This approach will identify schools that include a representative sample of students and have sufficient technology resources to pilot the assessments.

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**SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium**

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