Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 53

Week ending Friday, February 24, 2012

Top News This Week

- · Item Specifications Showcase 3 time change
- · Chiefs meeting held on Friday, February 24
- · State participation at accessibility and accommodations policy meeting

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.

From the Executive Director

Greetings. This week, the Executive Committee approved proceeding with contract negotiations for "RFP-14 Item/Task Writing/Review—Pilot." This \$20 million contact will be the largest we have issued to date and represents a significant milestone in the development of the assessment system. Work is expected to begin in March and will go through the middle of 2013.

This project includes several important components, including development and research (through small-scale trials and cognitive labs) of a small number of items and tasks. Our goal is to better understand how students respond to different item types, particularly technology-enhanced items that take advantage of online delivery. This research will inform the development of the large item bank needed to create a robust computer adaptive test. The final contract deliverable is the creation and pilot testing of a first round of about 10,000 items and tasks. All items and tasks will be reviewed for content, bias and sensitivity based on the guidelines being developed through RFP-04 Item Specifications.

Speaking of RFP-04, next week brings the final review of the item and task specifications. These documents will guide item writers and reviewers in the development of high-quality items/tasks that will allow the assessment system to measure the breadth and depth of the Common Core State Standards (see announcement below regarding Showcase 3). Materials for feedback will be posted online next week for review through March 16. We would like to hear from a broad range of stakeholders, including district administrators, teachers, partners, and vendors.

Thank you to the Item Development Work Group—and everyone who has participated in the development and review of the item and task specifications—for your dedication to this important project. JW

Announcements

Item Specifications Showcase 3 time change—The time of Item Specifications Showcase 3 has been changed to 11:30–2:00 p.m. Pacific on Tuesday, February 28. We apologize for this adjustment, which is due to an unavoidable scheduling conflict. Participation is strongly encouraged, as this will be the final showcase for these materials. The feedback period ends on March 16. It is very important to the success of the process for as many member states as possible to provide feedback to these materials. Please see separate emails for meeting details.

State participation at accessibility and accommodations policy meeting—In support of the work associated with development of accessibility and accommodations policies and manuals, the Consortium is requesting that each state send three SEA representatives to a meeting on March 27–28 in Salt Lake City. The purpose of the meeting is to initiate consensus building among the Smarter Balanced states

regarding definitions of specific student subgroups and guidelines for accessibility and accommodations policies. Please see separate emails for further details.

Smarter Balanced Chiefs meeting—On Friday, February 24, the Consortium's chief state school officers gathered in person and virtually for a full day meeting. Discussions related to test length, implementing the Common Core, and strategic communications. Future in-person meetings are being scheduled for the summer and fall.

Upcoming Events

February 28, 11:30–2:00 p.m. Pacific—The time of Item Specifications Showcase 3 has been changed. Please see additional details in the Announcements section above.

March 27–28—State participation at Accessibility and Accommodations meeting—In support of the work associated with development of accessibility and accommodations policies and manuals, the Consortium is requesting that each state send three SEA representatives to a meeting on March 27-28, 2012 in Salt Lake City, Utah. Please see additional details in the Announcements section above.

Resources

Smarter Balanced in the news—Two recent articles highlighted the work of Smarter Balanced. Governing magazine interviewed Joe Willhoft and Carissa Miller about the development of next-generation assessments aligned to the Common Core: http://www.governing.com/blogs/view/two-paths-toward-common-core-standards-assessments.html. Linda Darling-Hammond published an op-ed in the Sacramento Bee about the benefits of Smarter Balanced assessments for California, noting that the assessments will "include more written responses from students, plus tasks that require them to engage in research, solve more complex problems and use technology."

http://www.sacbee.com/2012/02/14/4261504/for-california-schools-we-need.html

New external website—Smarter Balanced has a new external website at www.smarterbalanced.org. The site showcases the innovative work of the Consortium and provides frequent updates on activities, milestones, and events. Visitors are able to explore an interactive timeline of activities by school year, download new fact sheets and resources, and sign up for a monthly e-newsletter. In addition, new templates and materials are now available on the collaboration site.

Year Two, First Quarter Project Report available—The quarterly project report for the period ending December 31, 2011, can be found at http://www.smarterbalanced.org/pub-n-res/smarter-balanced-quarterly-report-december-2011/. The report details the Consortium's progress in key areas and priorities for the next three months.

The IT architecture and requirements are available online at http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/technology/ (refer to section titled "IT Systems Architecture Reports and Resources").

Link to the Technology Readiness Tool webinar recording—The State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) 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.

ESEA Flexibility Waiver support—State Chiefs and state leads: A document designed to support Smarter Balanced 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.

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.

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 Smarter Balanced 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.

How will teachers be selected to participate in the training cadres starting in 2012-13?

Smarter Balanced is committed to involving teachers in the development and vetting of formative assessment practices and professional learning opportunities that are a critical component of a balanced assessment system focused on improving teaching and learning. Beginning in the 2012-13 school year, Smarter Balanced will support each state's convening of an average of 90 teachers for a total of five days to participate in trainings on professional development modules related to the assessment system, and to select formative practices and tools for inclusion in the digital library. It is expected that states will work with existing networks for professional development, and will invite the regional representatives of professional organizations to recommend teachers to participate in the sessions. Additional information will be available in early 2013.

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