

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 54

Week ending Friday, March 2, 2012

Top News This Week

- ELA/Literacy Content Specifications claims approved
- Item Specifications and Guidelines 3rd draft released
- Webinar on March 9: Computer adaptive testing
- Webinar on March 14: NAEP grade 12 preparedness research

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. I'm pleased to announce that the Governing States approved the claims in the English Language Arts/Literacy Content Specifications this week. As you'll recall, the Content Specifications underwent two rounds of public review last year. Governing States then discussed and voted on the claims, which are broad statements of the assessment system's learning outcomes.

During the review process, the claims were revised based on extensive feedback. For example, we added a total claim for grades 3–8 and high school. Since the claims establish score reporting categories, this will allow the Smarter Balanced assessments to indicate overall proficiency in the ELA/literacy domain. Additionally, even though the broad headings for the claims remained essentially intact throughout our review and adoption process, the text descriptions of all claims were edited to improve the clarity and scope of the assessments. The claims are:

- **Total English language arts/literacy (Grades 3–8)** — “Students can demonstrate progress toward college and career readiness in English language arts and literacy.”
- **Total English language arts/literacy (High School)** — “Students can demonstrate college and career readiness in English language arts and literacy.”
- **Reading** — “Students can read closely and analytically to comprehend a range of increasingly complex literary and informational texts.”
- **Writing** — “Students can produce effective and well-grounded writing for a range of purposes and audiences.”
- **Speaking and Listening** — “Students can employ effective speaking and listening skills for a range of purposes and audiences.”
- **Research/Inquiry** — “Students can engage in research and inquiry to investigate topics, and to analyze, integrate, and present information.”

The ELA/literacy claims are directly related to the Common Core State Standards and provide guidance for the development of items and tasks. Each item and task will be linked to the claims and assessment targets established in the Content Specifications. Assessment writers will also establish how each item and task provides evidence for mastery of the claims. Examples of this process are available in the item and task specifications released for review this week (see announcement below):

<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/#item>.

We are completing revisions to the Mathematics Content Specifications, and Governing States will vote

on the claims later this month. JW

Announcements

ELA/Literacy Content Specifications claims approved—Governing States voted to approve the ELA/Literacy Content Specifications claims.

Item Specifications 3rd draft released—This week, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium released a third draft of Item Specifications and Guidelines for review and comment. These item specifications provide item writers with specific guidance on how to translate the Common Core State Standards into actual assessment items. In addition, guidelines for bias and sensitivity, accessibility and accommodations, and style help item developers and reviewers ensure consistency and fairness. The item specifications and presentation materials are available on the Consortium's website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/#item>. A survey to share feedback on the item specifications will be posted in the same location. Feedback will be due by 11:59 p.m. Pacific on Friday, March 16.

Webinar on computer adaptive testing (CAT)—On Friday, March 9, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Pacific, Smarter Balanced will present its second CAT webinar. This webinar will focus on the practical and technical issues we face in item development and test design and will feature invited speaker Gage Kingsbury, Vice President for the International Association for Computerized Adaptive Testing and Senior Research Fellow at the Northwest Evaluation Association. Please see separate email for webinar details.

Webinar on NAEP grade 12 preparedness research—On Wednesday, March 14, from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Pacific, Smarter Balanced will host a webinar presentation by Cornelia Orr and Susan Loomis, both from the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), who will present recent findings from NAGB's research on academic preparedness for entry into college credit bearing courses and job training programs without the need for remediation. This research focused on determining the feasibility of reporting on academic preparedness using grade 12 student performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading and mathematics. This will be an excellent opportunity to discuss findings from the NAEP research as states prepare for reporting college and career readiness of their high school students. Please see separate email for webinar details.

Upcoming Events

CAT webinar—March 9, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Pacific. Please see additional details in the Announcements section above.

NAGB webinar—March 14, 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Pacific. Please see additional details in the Announcements section above.

State participation at Accessibility and Accommodations meeting—March 27–28: 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. State leads: please see additional details in the email sent from sbac@wested.org on February 24.

Resources

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.

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.

Will the results from the Smarter Balanced summative assessment include both a scale score and a performance category, such as “advanced” or “basic”?

Results from the Smarter Balanced assessment will include both a scale score that can be used to assess year-to-year growth and an achievement level category. The results of the 11th-grade assessment will provide an indicator of college and career readiness. The number and names of the achievement categories are Consortium-level decisions that have not yet been determined; these decisions will be made by the Smarter Balanced Governing States.

Our proposal to the U.S. Department of Education also established a procedure for establishing and validating achievement standards (cut scores). Following the field test in spring 2014, the Consortium will conduct standard setting for the summative assessments in grades 3–8 and grade 11 in ELA/literacy and mathematics. These performance standards will be validated in July/August 2015 using spring 2015 operational data.

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Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

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