

## Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

### Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 55

Week ending Friday, March 9, 2012

#### Top News This Week

- Beverly Young named Higher Education representative on Executive Committee
- Technology Readiness Data Collection
- Technology Readiness Reporting
- Item Specifications and Guidelines 3rd draft released and survey posted
- NAEP grade 12 preparedness research webinar to be held on March 14

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, the co-chairs of the Item Development and Performance Tasks Work Groups, Marty McCall, Christyan Mitchell from the PMP, and I traveled to Chicago for a meeting with Sue Pimentel and David Coleman, contributing authors to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy. Unfortunately, Sue took ill and couldn't make the trip, not wanting to infect the rest of us with her influenza (thank you, Sue). Joining us, however, was Jennifer Dean, who works with David and Sue as a measurement expert in their continuing efforts to support the Common Core.

Our conversation focused on the transition from ELA/Literacy Content and Item Specifications to actual item writing and test construction, which will begin shortly. We shared our approach for ensuring that the items and tasks developed for the Smarter Balanced assessment system hold true to the breadth and depth of knowledge and skills in the Common Core. Both Sue and David—and many other content experts—have been tremendously helpful in providing feedback on our work and the nuances of the Common Core over the past year.

In addition, Sue and David are two founding principals of the nonprofit Student Achievement Partners, which is developing high-quality resources for educators implementing the Common Core and making them freely available online at: <http://www.achievethecore.org/>. This collection will be an asset for the Consortium as we develop a digital library of formative assessment practices and professional learning resources.

On a separate note, earlier this week, the Executive Committee welcomed Beverly Young as a new member to the Committee, filling one of two slots representing higher education. Beverly is assistant vice chancellor of academic affairs for the California State University System and serves as a higher education lead from California. Her experience developing partnerships between K-12 and higher education and strengthening teacher preparation will be a valuable contribution to the Executive Committee.

Finally, the National Association of Secondary School Principals recently published an interview with Smarter Balanced Policy Coordinator Sue Gendron about the Common Core and the transition to next generation assessments. You can read the interview online at [http://www.nassp.org/Content/158/pl\\_mar12\\_riddile.pdf](http://www.nassp.org/Content/158/pl_mar12_riddile.pdf). JW

#### Announcements

New Higher Education representative on Executive Committee—Dr. Beverly L. Young, assistant vice

chancellor of academic affairs for the California State University System, was elected by the higher education state leads to serve on the Consortium's Executive Committee. Young is one of two higher education representatives on the nine-member governing body and also serves as a Smarter Balanced Higher Education Lead for California. Additional information is available on the Consortium's public website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/news/californias-young-joins-smarter-balanced-executive-committee/>.

Technology Readiness Data Collection—To ensure that district and school staff time is used effectively, Smarter Balanced encourages states to consider a phased rollout of the Technology Readiness Tool. Although not required, several states have determined that the following revised timeline would likely provide better support to their districts and schools as they begin the data collection and submission process:

1. **March 20–April 3, Data Collection Opens:** Consider choosing a small sample for this round—such as 1 large district and 1 small district with a balance of elementary and high schools—in order to work out any state-specific issues and additional communications that need to be created to ease the process for the statewide rollout;
2. **April 3–9, Enhance Communications:** Consider issues and challenges, solidify the state-specific FAQs, and help enhance Consortium FAQs;
3. **April 9–June 14, Begin Statewide Data Collection:** Use both the lessons learned from the early implementors and the enhanced FAQs to support a statewide rollout.

Technology Readiness Reporting—We also want you to be aware that several state members (in Smarter Balanced and PARCC) have expressed concern that reporting on the “Readiness Gap” would be premature. First, both consortia need baseline data from districts and schools to help determine the minimum requirements for technology. Second, Smarter Balanced just released its RFP for the Testing Platform (Testing Engine RFP-11). Until we contract with a test platform provider, we can't guarantee which hardware will be required and how much bandwidth the application will use. Member states have advised us that accuracy in this area is critical—otherwise districts may be encouraged to make incorrect purchasing decisions. To ensure accuracy in reporting, we are altering the reporting timeline for the Technology Readiness Tool.

1. **March 20–April 8:** No reports will be available. Our contractor for the Technology Readiness Tool has to adjust the programming to address the consortia's request for changes.
2. **April 9th–June 14:** Data collection summaries will be available. These reports will describe back to the district and school what was submitted to help improve data quality and to inform the two consortia regarding which types of hardware and operating systems are currently being used in schools.
3. **As Soon As Possible:** Gap analysis reports will be available once we can ensure that minimum requirements are accurate and practicable.

Please send questions and concerns to [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org).

Item Specifications 3rd draft released and survey posted—The third draft of the Item Specifications and Guidelines were released 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 public website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/#item>. The survey to share feedback on the item specifications is posted in the same location. Feedback is due by 11:59 p.m. Pacific on Friday, March 16.

Webinar on computer adaptive testing (CAT)—On Friday, March 9, Smarter Balanced presented its second CAT webinar. This webinar focused on the practical and technical issues we face in item development and test design and featured invited speaker Gage Kingsbury, vice president for the International Association for Computerized Adaptive Testing and senior research fellow at the Northwest Evaluation Association. Playback details will be available shortly.

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**

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](mailto:sbac@wested.org) on February 24.

### **Resources**

External website—The Smarter Balanced external website can be found at [www.smarterbalanced.org](http://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.

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).

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>.

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