

## Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

### Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 56

Week ending Friday, March 16, 2012

#### Top News This Week

- RFP posted for Test Delivery System
- RFP posted for Initial Achievement Level Descriptors Development
- Mathematics Content Specifications Claims vote opens next week
- NAEP grade 12 preparedness webinar recording available

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. On Wednesday, we hosted an informative webinar with Cornelia S. Orr and Susan Loomis of the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) on research conducted by the NAGB on academic preparedness for entry into college credit-bearing courses and job training programs.

NAGB governs and sets policies for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the largest nationally representative student assessment, and has recently conducted a series of studies to determine the feasibility of using 12th-grade NAEP results in English language arts and mathematics as an indicator for postsecondary academic preparedness. While the full results will be published later this spring, one finding comparing grade 12 NAEP scores with SAT scores shows that students who are proficient in ELA or mathematics on the 12th-grade NAEP are likely to score at or above the mean on the SAT.

This work represents an ongoing research effort to better understand the linkage between NAEP and postsecondary academic preparedness. This research contributes to what we know about college readiness and will be helpful as we move forward. (Additional NAGB research on 12th-grade preparedness is available here: <http://www.nagb.org/publications/reports-papers.htm>).

Smarter Balanced remains committed to assessing the full depth and breadth of the knowledge and skills specified in the Common Core State Standards. Nevertheless, we also recognize that academic readiness—as defined by the Common Core—is only part of a more comprehensive set of knowledge and skills that contribute to college and career readiness, such as work habits, persistence, and postsecondary planning.

Smarter Balanced will be supporting a substantial research effort to guide the setting of performance standards, drawing upon multiple sources of empirical data, including: international and national benchmarks such as PISA, TIMSS, NAEP, SAT, and ACT; and information about student performance in high school and subsequent postsecondary success from state-level longitudinal data systems. Once postsecondary performance data is available from students who took the Smarter Balanced assessment, these performance standards will be further refined.

Next week, there will be another valuable opportunity to learn about college readiness assessments through a webinar on California's Early Assessment Program (EAP). Started by the California State University System, EAP is a model for the use of K-12 assessments to signal to students in high school their readiness for entry-level, credit-bearing coursework. JW

## **Announcements**

The RFP for Test Delivery System (RFP-11/18) has been released to vendors—Proposals are due Monday, April 16, to develop a computer-based, adaptive test delivery system for the Smarter Balanced assessments. The RFP is available at <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Jobs-Contracts.aspx>

The RFP for Initial ALDs Development (RFP-12) has been released to vendors—Proposals are due Thursday, April 12, to develop initial achievement level descriptors for the Smarter Balanced summative assessment. The RFP is available at <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Jobs-Contracts.aspx>

Mathematics Claims vote opens next week—The Smarter Balanced Content Specifications for mathematics have been through two rounds of review and extensive revisions/editing based on the feedback from states and organizations. At the heart of the Content Specifications are the claims made about what students should know and can do within mathematics. These claims will serve as the basis for essential assessment development decisions, such as test design and reporting categories. Given the important role these claims will have in future assessment development work, Governing States will be asked next week to review these claims for approval.

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 9–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).

Recording of webinar on computer adaptive testing (CAT)—A recording of the March 9 webinar presentation by Gage Kingsbury, vice president for the International Association for Computerized Adaptive Testing and senior research fellow at the Northwest Evaluation Association, can now be viewed at: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/resources-events/events/>

Recording of webinar on NAEP grade 12 preparedness research—A recording of the March 14 webinar presentation by Cornelia S. Orr and Susan Loomis, both from the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), can now be viewed at: <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/webinars>

### **Upcoming Events**

Webinar on California's Early Assessment Program—March 21, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Pacific. State and Higher Education leads: please see additional details in the email sent from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org) on March 14.

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>.

### **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 scores on the Smarter Balanced assessment support differentiating student performance for the purpose of placement?*

A primary feature of the Smarter Balanced system is the commitment by higher education institutions to recognize an agreed-upon performance level on the 11th-grade summative assessment as one piece of evidence that students are ready for entry-level, credit-bearing coursework in English and mathematics and can be exempted from remedial or developmental coursework. If students score at the college-ready

level and wish to take more advanced courses, additional information would be needed to make specific course placement decisions. Likewise, if students score below the college-ready level, a placement test or diagnostic assessment may be needed to determine their developmental needs.

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