

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 57

Week ending Friday, March 23, 2012

Top News This Week

- Mathematics Content Specifications Claims vote open until March 26
- Higher education members added to work groups
- Architecture Review Board members announced
- Recording of webinar on California's Early Assessment Program available
- SmarterBalanced.org email server downtime this weekend

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. A survey of more than 10,000 teachers conducted by Scholastic and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation sheds new light on how teachers view key issues in education. Among the interesting findings: Nearly 4 in 5 teachers are aware of the Common Core State Standards. Teachers also report that they need tools and supports to effectively implement the standards, such as professional development, curriculum resources, and formative assessments. The full report is available here: <http://www.scholastic.com/primarysources/download.asp>.

The study also underscores how important formative assessments are to teachers. Fully 92 percent agreed that formative, ongoing assessments are absolutely critical or very important to measuring students' academic achievement, ranking first among several assessment types. Other research among parents and teachers has come to similar conclusions about the value of assessments throughout the year to track student progress.

The Smarter Balanced theory of action recognizes that formative assessment practices are essential to support the needs of teachers on a daily basis as they help students learn and progress on their path toward college- and career-readiness. These tools and strategies support day-to-day, classroom-based decisions and help educators better understand what students are and are not learning, and how to adjust instruction accordingly. Making high-quality formative practices and strategies available will help ensure that Smarter Balanced is not just an assessment of learning, but an assessment for learning.

In the coming weeks, Smarter Balanced work groups and member states will review the Formative Master Work Plan, which outlines our approach to developing a digital library of professional development materials, resources, and tools aligned to the Common Core State Standards and Smarter Balanced claims and assessment targets. These research-based instructional tools will be available on-demand to help teachers address learning challenges and differentiate instruction. The digital library will include professional development materials related to all components of the assessment system, such as scoring rubrics for performance tasks.

I want to recognize the co-chairs of the Formative Assessment Practices and Professional Learning Work Group, Judy Snow from Montana and Marty Gephardt from Vermont, for their hard work over many months to put this plan together. I look forward to a robust conversation as we finalize the approach for this important component of the assessment system. JW

Announcements

Mathematics Content Specifications Claims vote open—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 have been asked to review these claims for approval. Governing State Leads: Please see additional details in email sent from sbac@wested.org on March 20. The poll closes Monday, March 26.

Representatives from the higher education community become work group members—Twenty individuals from higher education have been selected to participate as work group members. Each of the 10 work groups now has two members representing higher education institutions who will provide valuable input both as subject matter experts and as representatives from colleges and universities.

Architecture Review Board members announced—The Architecture Review Board (ARB) will support the ongoing implementation and enhancement phase of the IT Systems Architecture initiative. ARB members were nominated by Smarter Balanced Governing States, selected by the Technical Assistance Working Group (TAWG), and formally approved by the Executive Committee. The members include:

- Karl Buchanan, Wasatch District IT Director, Wasatch School District, Utah
- Glenn Gorton, IT Client Services Director, Michigan Department of Education
- Josh Klein, Chief Information Officer, Oregon Department of Education
- Rodney Okamoto, California Department of Education
- Brenda Williams, Division Lead, Superintendent's Office, Office of Technology, West Virginia Department of Education
- David Wu, Assistant Superintendent, Hawaii Department of Education
- Jason Young, Data Manager—Longitudinal Data Systems, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- John Fleischman, Assistant Superintendent of Technology Services, California Department of Education
- Phil Emer, Director of Technology Planning and Policy, North Carolina State University

Recording of webinar on The Early Assessment Program, California's Approach to College Readiness available—California's Early Assessment Program (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 college coursework. A recording of the March 21 webinar presentation on the EAP by Dr. Beverly Young, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for the California State University System and Smarter Balanced Higher Education Lead and Executive Committee member, can now be viewed at: <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/higher-education/higher-education-meetings>.

SmarterBalanced.org email server downtime this weekend—The SmarterBalanced.org email server will be down from Saturday afternoon on March 24 to Sunday afternoon on March 25. The following addresses will be impacted: Tony.Alpert@smarterbalanced.org and Info@smarterbalanced.org. Please be aware that during this time, messages sent to these addresses will not be delivered. If you experience any returned messages, please resend them after the outage period. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

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>.

RFP for Initial Achievement Level Descriptors 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](#).

Upcoming Events

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.

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 one large district and one 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.

Resources

External website—The Smarter Balanced external website can be found 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.

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 .

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 scores on the summative assessment be comparable if some students take it at the beginning of the 12-week administration window, while others are tested at the end?

The summative assessment will be administered during the last 12 weeks of the school year. This administration window is designed to allow states and school districts flexibility to ensure that all students have access to the technology resources required to administer the assessment. However, depending on the school year calendar and technology capacity at the local level, it also means that some students could take the summative assessment weeks earlier than others. Smarter Balanced will continue to evaluate the impact of the summative assessment administration window on student scores during the Pilot Test (early 2013) and the Field Test (early 2014) to determine if adjustments in scoring or administration are necessary.

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Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd—Project Management Partner

sbac@wested.org

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