

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 58

Week ending Friday, March 30, 2012

Top News This Week

- Formative Master Work Plan feedback from states and work groups due April 10
- CTB/McGraw-Hill selected for pilot test item research and development
- PIO communications update webinar held

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, representatives from Smarter Balanced member states met in Salt Lake City to discuss accessibility and accommodations policies as part of RFP-06 Accessibility and Accommodations Policy Guidelines. The focus of this effort is to identify, research, and recommend accessibility and accommodations guidelines and policies for English language learners, English language learners with disabilities, students with disabilities, and students with 504 plans. This represents a critical first step in ensuring the Smarter Balanced assessment system provides valid, reliable, and fair measures of achievement and growth regardless of language or ability.

Earlier this month, RFP-06 contractor Measured Progress/ETS surveyed Consortium member states to collect data on state definitions, policies, and accessibility guidelines regarding participation in large-scale assessments. Results of the survey were presented this week and helped to build consensus on identification of four student subgroups.

Meeting participants also discussed the key issues that need to be addressed to develop common definitions and policies. Groups representing special education, English language learners, test administration, and content specialists also provided initial feedback on draft guidelines.

In addition to the work to develop common definitions and policies, the Consortium is finalizing accessibility and accommodations guidelines for item and task development and review. Smarter Balanced items and tasks will be accessible to as many students as possible without adaptation, while also supporting accommodations to meet the needs of specific subgroups of students, including: auditory presentation of content; tactile presentation of content (e.g., Braille); and translated presentation of content in signed form and select languages.

Technology will play an important role in delivering assessments that fit the needs of individual students. Individual elements within items and tasks will be associated with a variety of accommodations that can be delivered to students automatically based on their profile.

Technology alone, however, is not sufficient to ensure that the assessment system provides all students an equal opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do. That's why our work is guided by experts in the field, including our Technical Advisory Committee and advisory panels on English language learners and students with disabilities. It is also why we are spending a significant amount of time to develop a shared vision within the Consortium about how to serve students with special needs. This vision will guide our work through the development and testing of the assessments through 2014. JW

Announcements

Formative Master Work Plan feedback from states and work groups due April 10—Member states and work groups are requested to provide feedback on the Formative Master Work Plan that will be reviewed, consolidated, and integrated into the Plan. Each member state and each work group is requested to send one (1) response by April 10 to sbac@wested.org, reflecting as comprehensive a view from the state agency—including the Chief State School Officer—or work group, as possible. Please see the email sent from sbac@wested.org on March 27 for instructions for submitting feedback and key questions to guide your responses.

Pilot test item research and development contract awarded—The Consortium has awarded CTB/McGraw-Hill the contract for RFP-14 Pilot Item/Task/Stimulus Research, Development, and Reviews. CTB/McGraw-Hill will work with the Item Development and Performance Tasks Work Groups to research and develop items for the pilot test, and will be working in partnership with American Institutes for Research, Data Recognition Corporation, Council for Aid to Education, College Board, and Human Resources Research Organization.

PIO communications update webinar held—This webinar provided an update on communications resources available from the Consortium, including collateral materials, digital tools, and assistance to ensure that stakeholders receive timely, accurate, and compelling information about the new assessments. A summary of the webinar will be distributed shortly.

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, Sacramento County Office of Education, Sacramento, California
- Phil Emer, Director of Technology Planning and Policy, North Carolina State University

Resources

Recording of webinar on the Early Assessment Program (EAP), California's Approach to College Readiness available—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-webinars>

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 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 can educators get involved in the development and review of items/tasks?

In March 2012, Smarter Balanced awarded RFP-14 Pilot Item/Task/Stimulus Research, Development, and Reviews to CTB/McGraw-Hill. Through this contract, the Consortium will research the performance of innovative items and tasks through cognitive labs and limited field trials; develop the first 10,000 items and tasks (out of the total 47,000) for pilot testing in spring 2013; and analyze the results. The contractor will hire and train educators from Smarter Balanced states to write and review items and tasks for content, bias, and sensitivity based on the guidelines being developed through RFP-04 Item Specifications. Details about how teachers can apply for item/task writing and item/task review positions will be available shortly. Information about how schools can volunteer to participate in the pilot testing in spring 2013 will be available this summer. Smarter Balanced will field test its full array of its 47,000 items and tasks in spring 2014. Teacher recruitment for writing those items/tasks and for participation in the field testing will occur in the 2013-14 school year.

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Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd—Project Management Partner

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