

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 61

Week ending Friday, April 20, 2012

Top News This Week

- RFP posted for Report System Development
- Technology Readiness update

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. As states, districts, and schools plan their approach to instruction and prepare for the transition to next-generation assessments in the 2014-15 school year, technology is often at the top of the list of concerns. Smarter Balanced is working with member states to develop a full picture of technology readiness at the school level. The Technology Readiness Tool—now available to districts and schools—will provide baseline information about current capacity, with results expected this summer.

We also recognize that schools and districts make decisions annually about what types of hardware and software to purchase for instructional use, and they want to know if the computers they acquire over the next two years will be compatible with the new Smarter Balanced assessments. To address this need for guidance, we have a two-part strategy.

Within a week, Smarter Balanced will issue draft guidelines for new equipment purchases. It is important to note that these guidelines do not mean that schools must purchase new computers for online assessments. Rather, our goal is to provide clear information for districts making new instructional technology purchases so that they can proceed with the assurance that these devices will be able to administer the assessments in 2014-15.

During the spring and summer, Smarter Balanced will examine the results of the Technology Readiness Tool to finalize minimum technology requirements for the 2014-15 school year, which will include the types of legacy systems (i.e., existing hardware and software) that will be compatible with the assessment system. This effort will need to balance several factors, including: current infrastructure and capacity (as measured by the Technology Readiness Tool); the very real budget constraints faced by states; and the shared desire to use the newest available technology to assess the true depth and breadth of the Common Core State Standards.

In addition—as with much of our work—several projects that will inform minimum technology requirements are proceeding in parallel. Hardware and software specifications will be informed by the contractor selected for RFP-19 Test Administration, and bandwidth requirements will be determined in collaboration with the contractor selected for RFP-11/18/20 Test Engine Development. However, we are confident that, by late summer, this work will be far enough along to inform our minimum requirements.

I want to thank and acknowledge the hard work of the Technology Approach Work Group and of my colleague Tony Alpert for moving this effort forward. Smarter Balanced is committed to providing the most accurate guidance on technology to member states as quickly as possible. JW

Announcements

The RFP for Report System Development (RFP-15) has been released to vendors—Proposals are due Wednesday, May 23, to build the reports and the technology applications to implement the reporting system for the summative and interim assessments. The RFP is available at <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Jobs-Contracts.aspx>.

Technology Readiness update--Technology Readiness data collection efforts are currently underway across member states, and data collection reports are available. These reports describe back to districts and schools what has been submitted to help improve data quality and to inform the two consortia about which types of hardware and operating systems are currently being used in schools. After the data collection window closes and minimum technology specifications have been determined, gap analysis reports will be available.

The RFP for Test Administration (RFP-19) has been released to vendors—Proposals are due Wednesday, May 16, to recruit participants for the pilot test and field test, develop test administrator and test coordinator manuals, produce online training modules to prepare states, districts, and schools to administer the pilot test and field test, provide help desk services, and update administration materials and training for operational testing. The RFP is available at <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Jobs-Contracts.aspx>.

The RFP for a Sustainability Task Force consultant (RFP-22) has been released to vendors—Smarter Balanced has released to vendors the Sustainability Task Force RFP for a consultant to provide post-grant options on how states will procure, administer, and maintain the assessment system after the federal grant ends. Proposals are due Thursday, May 17. The RFP is available at <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Jobs-Contracts.aspx>.

New email addresses—Smarter Balanced has transitioned to a uniform email address format under the smarterbalanced.org domain. Email sent to the @k12.wa.us or @ccsso.org accounts will be forwarded, but please update your contacts and address books for the following Consortium staff:

- Joe Willhoft (Joe.Willhoft@smarterbalanced.org)
- Tony Alpert (Tony.Alpert@smarterbalanced.org)
- Marty McCall (Marty.McCall@smarterbalanced.org)
- Jaci King (Jacqueline.King@smarterbalanced.org)
- Eddie Arnold (Eddie.Arnold@smarterbalanced.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 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 flexible—in terms of timing and content—will the optional interim assessments be?

The Smarter Balanced optional interim assessments are designed to provide educators with actionable information about student progress throughout the year. The interim assessments will include the same types of items and performance tasks as the summative assessment, drawn from a non-secure item bank. Timing and frequency of the interim assessments will be locally determined. In addition, teachers will have the option of administering a comprehensive interim assessment that mirrors the content of the summative assessment or selecting one or more content clusters to assess specific elements of the grade-level Common Core State Standards.

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Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd—Project Management Partner

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