

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 62

Week ending Friday, April 27, 2012

Top News This Week

- Educator opportunities for participation announced
- New hardware purchasing guidelines announced

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—and apologies for the delay in this edition of the Weekly Update. With spring in full swing across the country, schools are preparing for the final push before the end of the year. It is a time when many activities—from final projects to year-end assessments to preparation for special events and graduation—are all happening simultaneously.

The same is true for Smarter Balanced. We have issued 13 requests for proposals and awarded nine contracts (out of an expected 17) toward the development of the summative assessment. Eight of these contracts are currently active—meaning that work groups, state leads, and staff are working diligently to ensure that these projects remain on track and in sync.

Looking ahead to May, Governing States will soon receive a revised version of the Formative Master Work Plan. I would like to thank member states and work groups for providing feedback on the draft document earlier this month. The plan 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. Once adopted, we will organize the activities into procurements and begin developing RFPs.

In addition, claims for the Mathematics Content Specifications will move forward for approval from Governing States. We will also engage our stakeholders in a review of draft accessibility and accommodations policy guidelines developed through RFP-06.

Finally, I wanted to highlight an article co-authored by Jaci King, director of higher education collaboration, in *Trusteeship*, a publication of the Association of Governing Boards. "The Common Core State Standards: Closing the School-College Gap" discusses the impact of the CCSS and the important role governing boards and other higher education stakeholders can play in successful implementation of the standards. The article is available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Closing-the-School-College-Gap-AGB-Trusteeship.pdf>.

Our progress so far would not be possible without your work. Thank you for your continued support. JW

Announcements

Educator opportunities for participation—Governing State leads: This week, the recruitment for teachers to participate in stimulus reviews began with emails to Governing State leads. The Governing States will be asked to coordinate several recruitment activities this summer to support pilot test item and task development, as well as research on automated scoring and item procurement options—all part of Contract-14 Pilot Item/Task/Stimulus Research, Development, and Reviews. CTB/McGraw-Hill is leading

the contract with several partners including American Institutes for Research, Data Recognition Corporation, Council for Aid to Education, Human Resources Research Organization, and College Board. Please see separate emails for details.

New hardware purchasing guidelines—Smarter Balanced has developed hardware and operating system specifications for new technology purchases as part of a comprehensive approach to technology guidance. These guidelines provide clear information for schools and districts making new instructional technology purchases so that they can proceed with the assurance that these devices will be able to administer the Smarter Balanced assessments in the 2014-15 school year. The guidelines and FAQ are available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/technology/>.

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.

Upcoming Events

Chiefs meeting—Chiefs and state leads: The next meeting of the member state Chiefs will occur via webinar on Monday, April 30, at 1:00 p.m. (Pacific). Please see separate email for agenda and webinar information.

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.

What alternative assessment options will be available for students with special needs?

The Smarter Balanced assessment system will provide accurate measures of achievement and growth for students with disabilities and English language learners. The assessments are being designed from the beginning to address visual, auditory, and physical access barriers—allowing virtually all students to demonstrate what they know and can do.

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.

In addition, two other assessment consortia are being funded by the U.S. Department of Education to develop assessments for students with significant cognitive disabilities that will be compatible with Smarter Balanced.

- Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) – <http://dynamiclearningmaps.org>
- National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) – <http://www.ncscpartners.org>

--

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd—Project Management Partner

sbac@wested.org

aa_12