

## Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

### Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 63

Week ending Friday, May 4, 2012

#### Top News This Week

- Educator opportunities for participation announced
- Webinars for Accessibility and Accommodations announced
- Updated Item Specifications documents available
- Smarter Balanced eNewsletter launched

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. Let's talk about mathematics today. A new report released this week adds to the evidence about the strength of the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (CCSSM). William Schmidt of Michigan State University found that the CCSSM are closely aligned—approximately 90 percent consistent in terms of coherence and focus—with the standards of high-achieving countries (as measured by performance on the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study). A presentation of the research report, Common Core State Standards Math: The Relationship Between High Standards, Systemic Implementation and Student Achievement, is available at [http://www.achieve.org/files/BILL\\_CCSSM.ppt](http://www.achieve.org/files/BILL_CCSSM.ppt).

In addition, Schmidt found that states with existing standards that are similar to the CCSSM performed better on the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) than those states with standards that were less closely aligned with the CCSSM. While this finding does not necessarily prove a relationship between rigorous standards and higher student achievement, it appears to indicate that when standards are implemented well—with strong professional development and instructional supports for teachers—and paired with high-quality, rigorous assessments, they can make a difference.

Finally, Schmidt also reported on a survey of a representative sample of mathematics teachers in states that have adopted the Common Core, finding that 90 percent of teachers are familiar with the CCSSM and 70 percent have read them. However, the survey also demonstrated a disconnect between when states teach mathematics topics and the sequence of the CCSSM. Of some concern, only 25 percent of teachers said they would drop a topic they currently teach if the CCSSM placed it in a different grade.

Smarter Balanced is committed to supporting states as they implement the Common Core State Standards. Last month, many of our member states met in Atlanta as part of CCSSO's Implementing the Common Core Standards (ICCS) state collaborative meeting series. The meeting focused on how states can prepare teachers and administrators to transform student learning. JW

#### Announcements

Educator opportunities for participation—Governing State leads: Over the past two weeks, the Governing State leads received emails providing instructions on recruiting educators to support pilot test item and task development, stimulus reviews, and research on automated scoring and item procurement options. In addition, they were asked to identify an individual in their state to serve as a teacher involvement coordinator. This individual will serve as the point of contact for development and research opportunities. Upcoming development opportunities and recruiting timelines were also described so that Smarter

Balanced states are aware of and can support recruitment activities. These educator opportunities are 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.

Webinars for Accessibility and Accommodations announced—In support of the work associated with RFP-06, Development of Accessibility and Accommodations Policies and Materials, Smarter Balanced is requesting state leads to attend one of two webinars. The purpose of the webinar is to explain the conceptual framework that is intended as the foundation for future policy recommendations and to review preliminary recommendations about the support and tools available to various student subgroups. The webinar will be held twice to maximize opportunity for participants to attend. The dates and times are listed below.

- May 15, 2012, 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. eastern
- May 17, 2012, 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. eastern

Please see the email sent from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org) on May 1 for further details.

Updated Item Specifications documents are available—The item specifications provide item writers with guidance on how to translate the Common Core State Standards into items and tasks that will be contained within the Smarter Balanced assessment. It is recommended that individuals read the General Specifications document to best orient them to the breadth of the available materials. There are both item tables and sample items available. These documents represent the best current thinking on item alignment; however, we expect them to be updated as ongoing item and test developments occur. In addition, guidelines for bias and sensitivity, accessibility and accommodations, and style help item developers and reviewers ensure consistency and fairness. The updated item specifications materials are available on the Consortium's website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/#item>. Below are direct links to the general ELA/literacy and mathematics item/task specifications documents.

- ELA/literacy: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/TaskItemSpecifications/EnglishLanguageArtsLiteracy/ELAGeneralItemandTaskSpecifications.pdf>
- Mathematics:
  - Grades 3–5 <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/TaskItemSpecifications/Mathematics/MathematicsGeneralItemandTaskSpecificationsGrades3-5.pdf>
  - Grades 6–8 <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/TaskItemSpecifications/Mathematics/MathematicsGeneralItemandTaskSpecificationsGrades6-8.pdf>
  - High school <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/TaskItemSpecifications/Mathematics/MathematicsGeneralItemandTaskSpecificationsHighSchool.pdf>

Smarter Balanced eNewsletter launched—Smarter News, the Consortium's monthly eNewsletter, will provide updates on the development of the assessment system and activities in member states. The May edition includes information on new Common Core State Standards tools and resources, support for classroom teachers, and technology readiness—along with recent articles and announcements from Smarter Balanced. Smarter News is available on the Consortium's website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/about/>. To sign up to receive future editions, visit <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/stay-connected/>. Please be sure to add [info@smarterbalanced.org](mailto:info@smarterbalanced.org) as an approved sender to ensure the message doesn't get labeled as spam.

New email addresses—Smarter Balanced has transitioned to a uniform email address format: [firstname.lastname@smarterbalanced.org](mailto:firstname.lastname@smarterbalanced.org). 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](mailto:Joe.Willhoft@smarterbalanced.org))
- Tony Alpert ([Tony.Alpert@smarterbalanced.org](mailto:Tony.Alpert@smarterbalanced.org))
- Marty McCall ([Marty.McCall@smarterbalanced.org](mailto:Marty.McCall@smarterbalanced.org))
- Jaci King ([Jacqueline.King@smarterbalanced.org](mailto:Jacqueline.King@smarterbalanced.org))
- Eddie Arnold ([Eddie.Arnold@smarterbalanced.org](mailto:Eddie.Arnold@smarterbalanced.org))

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/>.

### **Upcoming Events**

Chiefs meeting—Chiefs and state leads: Due to the Memorial Day holiday, the next meeting of the member state Chiefs will occur via webinar on Tuesday, May 29, at 1:00 p.m. (Pacific).

### **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).

*When will schools and districts know which existing computers will be eligible to be used on the Smarter Balanced assessments in 2014-15?*

The decision about legacy operating systems will be informed by the data received from the Technology Readiness Tool. The first data collection for the survey closes in June 2012. We expect to complete our analysis of the data by July and will vet among our member states a comprehensive approach to the use of legacy systems by mid-August.

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**Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**

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