

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 65

Week ending Friday, May 18, 2012

Top News This Week

- Review of draft accessibility and accommodations policy framework
- Technology Readiness Tool data collection window extended
- Mathematics Content Specifications claims approved
- Automated Student Assessment Prize winners 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. The guiding principle for Smarter Balanced is to develop college- and career-ready assessments aligned to the full depth and breadth of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). We are working to achieve this goal by carefully translating the CCSS into assessment targets, test blueprints, and, ultimately, assessment items and performance tasks. In addition, the Consortium's close ties to the authors of the CCSS, content groups, and experts in the field help guide our work and ultimate success.

For example, this week I traveled to New York along with five work group members who have been involved in the development of the math assessment to meet Jason Zimba, founding partner of Student Achievement Partners (SAP) and a contributing author of the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (CCSSM), and two of his SAP colleagues. Jason and the SAP team have generously agreed to meet with us on a periodic basis to ensure that the development of the assessment system is faithful to the goals and objectives of the Common Core.

In addition to our collaboration with experts involved in the development of the CCSS, Smarter Balanced works closely with the leading ELA/literacy and mathematics content associations—which represent thousands of teachers and were closely involved in the development of the standards. For example, Smarter Balanced is a member of the Math Common Core Coalition, organized by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (<http://www.nctm.org/standards/mathcommoncore/>).

I am also privileged to serve on the advisory board for the Illustrative Mathematics Project, an initiative of the Institute for Mathematics and Education at the University of Arizona. Chaired by Bill McCallum, professor of mathematics and another contributing author of the CCSSM, Illustrative Mathematics provides guidance and develops resources to support the implementation of the standards. Through the website (<http://illustrativemathematics.org/>), the project has developed hundreds of tasks that illustrate the meaning of each standard and provide instructional best practices for teachers. This project aligns well with the Smarter Balanced vision of formative assessment practices that continually inform teaching and learning.

These partnerships ensure that we receive ongoing feedback from leading content experts and practitioners. As we begin large-scale development of assessment items and performance tasks, staying true to the CCSS is essential. JW

Announcements

Review of draft accessibility and accommodations policy framework—State leads: This week, webinars were held to explain the draft accessibility and accommodations policy framework and to review preliminary recommendations. The PowerPoint presentation and WebEx recordings were made available the day after each webinar to assist states in gathering input from stakeholders. Comments are due on or before May 29. Please see separate email sent from sbac@wested.org on May 15 for instructions.

Technology Readiness Tool data collection window extended—The first data collection window for the Technology Readiness Tool has been extended to June 30, 2012 (11:59 p.m. Hawaiian time). This extension was made at the request of states and will allow districts more time to submit data following the end of the school year. After the window closes, the data will be extracted, cleaned, and incorporated into a report regarding a technology plan and support for legacy operating systems (expected to be completed August 2012). Please be aware that the tool will remain open for subsequent data edits in preparation for the second data collection window anticipated in September 2012.

Mathematics Content Specifications claims approved—Governing States voted to approve the Mathematics Content Specifications claims.

Automated Student Assessment Prize winners announced—Sponsored by the Hewlett Foundation, the Automated Student Assessment Prize (ASAP) evaluated the ability of technology to assist in grading essays included in standardized tests. The second phase of the competition awarded \$100,000 to three winning teams that developed software that came closest to replicating the scores of essays graded by trained educators. Information on the winners is available at <http://gettingsmart.com/news/hewlett-foundation-announces-winners-of-essay-scoring-technology-competition/>. The research produced by the competition is impressive and will help us understand the extent to which we can use automated essay scoring in the development of Smarter Balanced assessments. More information is available at <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/debate/la-ol-automated-scoring-blowback-20120510,0,1234836.story>.

Director of ELA/literacy announced—Barbara Kapinus, PhD, has joined Smarter Balanced as the director of English language arts and literacy. As the ELA/literacy director, Barbara will work to ensure that Smarter Balanced assessments effectively measure the depth and breadth of the Common Core State Standards in ELA/literacy. She will oversee the ELA/literacy assessment item and performance task writing and review, as well as support the production and the development of assessment and professional learning materials for the Smarter Balanced assessment system.

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).

TAC meeting—The next meeting of the Smarter Balanced Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will occur on July 25–26, 2012, in Denver. As in the past, our member states are welcome to participate in person or virtually via live webinar. Those states wishing to participate in person may send one representative and will be required to use its own funds for transportation, lodging, per diem, and other expenses. If your

state is planning to participate in person, please email sbac@wested.org by the close of business on Friday, June 1, so we can confirm that the meeting space will accommodate all participants.

Resources

Year Two, Second Quarter Project Report available—The quarterly project report for the period ending March 31, 2012, can be found at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Quarterly-Report-March-2012.pdf>. The report details the Consortium's progress in key areas and priorities for the next three months.

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.

Does a shared assessment system require a shared or common curriculum?

No. We believe that curriculum decisions are best made by educators at the local and state levels. States participating in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium will have access to professional development materials and instructional resources for teachers through a digital library. These tools are optional and can be used, as needed, to complement state curriculum supports to districts and teachers.

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Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

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