

## Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

### Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 66

Week ending Friday, May 25, 2012

#### Top News This Week

- EC Co-Chair Nominations now being accepted
- New Smarter Balanced Staff announced
- Updated Master Work Plan and Procurement Schedule available
- AI Scoring information sought
- Additional ARB members named

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. The U.S. Department of Education this week held the fourth in a series of public meetings on issues related to the Race to the Top Assessment Program. Sponsored by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) and the Implementation and Support Unit (ISU), in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), this session focused on research and best practices for assessing students with disabilities through mainstream tests. Smarter Balanced was represented by work group members from six states.

The next generation assessments being developed by both Smarter Balanced and PARCC will be administered to many students who formerly participated in state-developed alternate assessments (sometimes called "two percent assessments"). Two other state consortia—the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) and Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)—are developing new assessments for the one percent of students with severe learning disabilities.

This public meeting provided findings from research on the alternate assessments that provide a wealth of information about how to develop and pilot assessment items with special populations; provide appropriate accommodations for low-performing students; and incorporate the principles of Universal Design for Learning. This meeting was particularly timely, as member states are now reviewing a draft of our accessibility and accommodations policy framework, which will guide the support and tools available to students with disabilities through the assessment system.

A core principle of our Theory of Action is a commitment to evidence-centered design. Rigorous research guides our work, and, where existing evidence is thin, we have incorporated topics into our research agenda.

For example, as part of Contract-14 Pilot Item/Task/Stimulus Research, Development, and Reviews, the project team is collaborating with member states on a study of automated scoring technologies, which will inform our approach to machine scoring of the assessments. American Institutes for Research (AIR) is soliciting previously administered constructed-response test items, associated student responses, and hand-scoring materials from member states in order to conduct initial analyses on automated scoring engines for mathematics and English language arts/literacy (more information is available below).

We are also learning from policy work underway in member states. This week, Achieve released a new report about strategies that could be useful to engage career and technical educators into Common Core

implementation activities. The report highlights efforts from eight states, including California, Missouri, and Oregon. The insightful report is available online at <http://www.achieve.org/files/CCSS-CTE-BridgingtheDivide.pdf>.

Best wishes for a relaxing Memorial Day weekend. JW

### **Announcements**

EC Co-Chair nominations—Nominations are now being accepted for the position of Executive Committee Co-Chair to fill the remainder of the term held by Judy Park. The term of this position runs through September 2012. Nominations close on Wednesday, June 6. Once the slate of nominees is finalized, the Governing State leads will vote to select the new Co-Chair. Please refer to the email sent from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org) on May 22 for detailed instructions and forms.

New Smarter Balanced staff announced—Shelbi Cole, PhD, joined the Consortium as the director of mathematics, bringing a wealth of experience in mathematics curriculum and assessment development from her work with the Connecticut State Department of Education. She also served as the co-chair of the Performance Tasks Work Group and was closely involved in the development of the Mathematics Content Specifications. Magda Chia was named director of support for under-represented students. Magda is completing her PhD in education, equity, and cultural diversity at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Her research focuses on validity and fairness in assessments across diverse student populations. She will play a critical role in ensuring the assessment system serves the needs of all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners. Shelbi and Magda can be reached at [Shelbi.Cole@smarterbalanced.org](mailto:Shelbi.Cole@smarterbalanced.org) and [Magda.Chia@smarterbalanced.org](mailto:Magda.Chia@smarterbalanced.org).

Updated Master Work Plan and procurement schedule (version 4.2)—Updated versions of the Master Work Plan and procurement schedule are now posted on the Smarter Balanced website at the following link: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/about/procurement/>

AI scoring information sought—As part of Contract-14 Pilot Item/Task/Stimulus Research, Development, and Reviews, the Consortium seeks to understand and extend the existing state of the art in automated scoring technologies. The results of this work will be used to develop a vision for automated scoring of student results on future assessments, for validation procedures, and to determine integration with human scoring if necessary.

American Institutes for Research (AIR), which is conducting this research, needs to obtain previously administered test items, associated student responses, and hand-scoring materials in order to conduct initial analyses on automated scoring engines for mathematics and English language arts. On behalf of AIR, Smarter Balanced is seeking test items and associated student responses to extended constructed-response questions and writing prompts that have been administered and hand scored for state assessments. Please refer to the email sent from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org) on May 22 for details.

Higher Education ARB members named—The Architecture Review Board (ARB) oversees modifications to the IT Systems Architecture, and makes recommendations regarding technology standards. The ARB comprises state K-12 and higher education representatives, as well as members of the Consortium's Technology Approach Work Group. The following new ARB members were selected as higher education representatives:

- Bonnie Edwards (CA) – Senior Information Systems Analyst, CA Community Colleges Chancellor's Office
- Xiaobing Hou (CT) – Assistant Professor, Central Connecticut State University
- Martin Horejsi (MT) – Associate Professor of Instructional Technology, University of Montana
- Richard Halverson (WI) – Associate Professor, Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis, University of Wisconsin–Madison

For further information regarding the IT Systems Architecture or the ARB, please visit <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/technology/>.

Review of draft accessibility and accommodations policy framework—State leads: Last 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](mailto: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>.

### **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](mailto: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](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).

*How will teachers be involved in scoring the Smarter Balanced assessments?*

Smarter Balanced is committed to involving teachers throughout the development and implementation of the assessment system. While many assessment components are efficiently scored with computer assistance, teachers will be involved in scoring portions of the summative assessment—including 10 percent of computer-scored, constructed-response items as back reads, and hand-scoring of items that cannot be scored by computer. These scoring activities provide an opportunity to deepen understanding of the Common Core State Standards and assessment practices. Teachers will not score assessments from their state, and those involved in scoring will be compensated through their state's normal procedures.

For the optional interim assessments, selected-response and technology-enhanced items will be machine scored. To the extent practicable, constructed-response items will also be scored through automated technologies, and items that cannot be scored by computer will be scored locally. Performance tasks will have some components that are scored by computer and others that require human scoring.

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**Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**

WestEd—Project Management Partner

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