

## Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

### Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 69

Week ending Friday, June 15, 2012

#### Top News This Week

- EC Co-Chair announced
- EC member election
- State Decision Summary circulated for comment
- Proficiency-Based Learning Task Force
- Apple makes iPad ready for summative tests
- Recording of webinar on standard setting available
- CCSSO convenes communications directors

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. With summer almost here, most schools are wrapping up the academic year. While students can look forward to a two-month break, states and educators will be busy with professional development on the Common Core State Standards and preparation for the coming year.

At Smarter Balanced, we are focused on several important initiatives that will ensure we remain on track to meet our development milestones and implement the assessment system by the 2014-15 school year. I want to thank all of the Consortium members and partners for their ongoing support as we work together on these key activities.

- **IT Readiness**—The first data collection window for the Technology Readiness Tool closes on June 30. At that time, a snapshot will be taken of all the information submitted by schools and the first readiness analysis will be completed. The analysis will guide Smarter Balanced in the development of the assessment system and help policymakers in developing strategies to systematically address educational technology gaps. To ensure that this information is as accurate as possible, it is critical that all schools complete the inventory by the end of June.
- **Procurement**—Several important contracts are expected to be awarded this summer, including RFP-11/18/20 Test Engine Development; RFP-12 Initial Achievement Level Descriptors; RFP-15 Report Development; and RFP-19 Test Administration. Through these contracts, the Consortium will address key questions about the assessment system, such as the overall length and footprint of the assessments, the design of the online reporting system, and the categories describing the different levels of student achievement.
- **Item Writing/Review and Research**—Teachers from Governing States will participate in the writing and review of assessment items and performance tasks for the Pilot Test of the assessment system in early 2013. In addition, students in 11 states will be recruited in June and July to participate in cognitive labs that will study how students approach and interact with different types of computer-administered items.

- **Engagement and Collaboration**—Several events will bring Consortium members together this summer to accelerate our work. The Higher Education Leads will convene in Chicago at the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) Policy Conference on August 8–10 to discuss plans for implementing the Common Core State Standards and Smarter Balanced assessments. On August 16–17, states participating in CCSSO's Implementing the Common Core Standards (ICCS) collaborative will meet in Seattle. In early September, the Consortium will hold our second Work Group/Contractor Collaboration Conference in St. Louis to discuss design and implementation issues and facilitate coordination on key projects.

Finally, I want to acknowledge an important transition at CCSSO with the announcement that Gene Wilhoit will retire. Under Gene's leadership, CCSSO played an essential role in the development of the Common Core State Standards and tirelessly supported next generation assessments. I am pleased that Gene will be staying on through the search for a new executive director. His guidance will be invaluable for sustaining CCSSO's momentum. Details of the announcement are available at [http://ccsso.org/News\\_and\\_Events/Press\\_Releases/Gene\\_Wilhoit\\_CCSSO\\_Executive\\_Director\\_Announces\\_Retirement.html](http://ccsso.org/News_and_Events/Press_Releases/Gene_Wilhoit_CCSSO_Executive_Director_Announces_Retirement.html). JW

### **Announcements**

Executive Committee Co-Chair announcement—The Governing States selected Joseph Martineau of Michigan to be the new Smarter Balanced Executive Committee Co-Chair.

Executive Committee member election—The election of Joseph Martineau of Michigan as Executive Committee Co-Chair creates a vacancy on the Executive Committee for a Governing State member. The Consortium has started the nomination process for a new Executive Committee member. You can find nomination information at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/home/ec-election>.

State Decision Summary—K-12 state leads and higher education leads: The draft State Decision Summary discussed at Tuesday's All States meeting and the recent Higher Education Leads meeting has been circulated for comment and further refinement by the K-12 and Higher Education Leads. The document is also available on the Smarter Balanced Collaboration Site at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/document-library>. Please send comments to Jaci King at [Jacqueline.King@smarterbalanced.org](mailto:Jacqueline.King@smarterbalanced.org) by Friday, June 29.

Proficiency-Based Learning Task Force—Smarter Balanced invites member states to engage in a task force to explore the definitions and ultimate implications of proficiency-based learning in the development and implementation of state assessments aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Deputy Paul Leather from New Hampshire will serve as the chair of this task force with facilitation and coordination provided by David Ruff from the Great Schools Partnership. The final product of the task force is intended to identify needs for states that have fully implemented or plan to fully implement a proficiency-based learning system. Please see the email sent from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org) on June 14 for details.

Apple makes iPad ready for summative tests—Apple announced this week that iOS 6, the upcoming version of the operating system that powers iPads, will include enhancements to facilitate large-scale secure assessments. The "Guided Access" feature will allow assessment systems to lock down iPads by limiting users to a single application, disabling the home button, and restricting touch input to certain areas of the screen. These features will improve security in a testing environment, preventing students from launching an Internet browser or capturing images of test questions. iOS 6 is compatible with the second- and third-generation iPads. For more information, visit <http://thejournal.com/articles/2012/06/12/apple-ios-6-guided-access-boon-for-high-stakes-testing-with-ipads.aspx>. An updated version of the Consortium's New Hardware Purchasing Guidelines includes this information, as well as additional clarifications, and can be found at [http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/SmarterBalanced\\_NewHardwareGuidelines.pdf](http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/SmarterBalanced_NewHardwareGuidelines.pdf).

Recording of webinar on standard setting available—Joe Willhoft, Executive Director of Smarter Balanced, discussed the process of standard setting (creating achievement level descriptors and

determining cut scores) for large-scale assessments. Joe described how standard-setting is typically approached in states and outlined Smarter's preliminary plans which will begin this summer with the drafting of initial achievement level descriptors. A recording of the June 13 webinar presentation can now be viewed at: <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/higher-education/higher-education-webinars>.

CCSSO convenes communications directors—CCSSO's 2012 Communications Director Network meeting brought together Common Core policy leads and PIOs from about 30 states and territories for a two-day conference in Chicago. The goal was to develop or refine strategic education reform communications plans intended to advance state efforts to prepare all students for college and career. Smarter Balanced participated in a panel discussion on communicating about assessments and hosted a dinner with member state representatives.

K-12 Center report on technology and assessments—The K-12 Center at ETS released a new report about how technology impacts assessment through greater accessibility, technology-enhanced items, and personalized learning. Sea Change in Assessment: How Technology Is Transforming K-12 Testing is available at <http://k12center.org/rsc/pdf/a-sea-change-in-assessment-letter-size.pdf>. The Alliance for Excellent Education and the K-12 Center will host a webinar about the report on June 25, 2012, from 1–2:30 p.m. eastern. The event will feature Kathleen Scalise from the University of Oregon, who participated in a Smarter Balanced webinar on innovative item types, and Test Administration Work Group member Juan D'Brot from the West Virginia Department of Education. Registration is available at <http://media.all4ed.org/registration-jun-25-2012>.

Item reviewer recruitment – K-12 state leads: An email was sent on June 12 inviting qualified educators from Smarter Balanced governing states to participate in the process of reviewing test items and performance tasks for the 2013 Pilot Test. The deadline for registration is June 25. Please contact your Teacher Involvement Coordinator for more details

### **Upcoming Events**

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) as soon as possible so we can confirm that the meeting space will accommodate all participants.

NCSA meeting—A schedule of presentations during the National Conference on Student Assessment (June 26–29) featuring Consortium members or topics related to the assessment system is available on the Collaboration Site at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/communications>.

### **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).

*To what extent will the assessments measure 21st-century skills?*

The Smarter Balanced assessment system will measure the full depth and breadth of the Common Core State Standards in ELA/literacy and mathematics. The authors of the Common Core explicitly focused on the cognitive skills and knowledge that students need to be ready to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing, academic college courses and in workforce training programs. Critical-thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills are a major focus in the standards. Through innovative items and performance tasks, Smarter Balanced will measure these important skills.

However, the Common Core authors also note that the standards are not meant to encompass everything a student should learn, or describe all of the skills that students need in the 21st century. Indeed, academic readiness—as defined by the Common Core—is only part of a more comprehensive set of knowledge and skills that contribute to college and career readiness, such as work habits, persistence, and postsecondary planning.

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