

## Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

### Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 70

Week ending Friday, June 22, 2012

#### Top News This Week

- Formative Assessment Master Work Plan approved by states
- Technology readiness data collection and best practices

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. I am pleased to report that the Governing States have approved the Smarter Balanced Formative Master Work Plan (Formative MWP), which details our approach to developing formative assessment practices and professional development materials for educators.

Formative, interim, and summative assessments comprise the three central components of our vision for a balanced assessment system that contributes to improved teaching and learning. While the summative component will be used as our accountability instrument, and the interim component can provide information across the school year on student progress using a comprehensive set of released items and tasks, the formative component is designed to provide resources and tools to teachers to improve their thoughtful use of assessment activities to enhance day-to-day classroom instruction.

The assessment practices and strategies that will result from the Formative MWP will help teachers address learning challenges and differentiate instruction. The Formative MWP outlines key projects that will help the Consortium achieve this vision:

- **Digital Library**—At the center of the Formative MWP is a digital library that will house resources created by Smarter Balanced and those submitted by states and educators. The digital library will allow teachers to rate and comment on materials so that knowledge from the classroom can be shared across the Consortium.
- **National Advisory Panel**—To develop criteria for the resources to be included in the digital library, the Consortium will convene a national advisory panel of experts on formative assessment practices and quality instruction of the Common Core State Standards.
- **Professional Learning Materials**—Smarter Balanced will develop online professional learning materials and supplemental assessment resources, including trainings on the components of the assessment system, the Common Core State Standards learning progressions, and using reporting data to inform instruction. Additional trainings will also be developed to help educators access and interpret Smarter Balanced interim and summative score reports as well as to search the web-based resources, use collaboration tools, and comment on resources in the digital library.
- **Exemplar Instructional Modules**—Smarter Balanced will develop 52 modules across grades, in English language arts/literacy and mathematics, that will demonstrate how to meet the needs of all learners in diverse settings with embedded formative assessment practices and descriptive feedback from rigorous tasks. These instructional modules will include lesson plans, templates, curriculum resources, evidence collection tools, teacher analysis, descriptive feedback strategies, and follow-up planning.

- **Engaging Member States and Educators**—Smarter Balanced will convene State Leadership Teams to provide input throughout the process. These teams will also be charged with recruiting an average of 90 educators per state to form State Networks of Educators that will recommend assessment literacy resources and formative tools for inclusion in the digital library, as well as provide feedback on the development of instructional modules.
- **Criteria to Evaluate Publisher Materials**—Smarter Balanced will provide materials that teachers and districts can use to evaluate the quality of assessment activities found in textbooks and other published materials, with regard to their alignment to the Common Core State Standards and the extent to which they assess the acquisition of deeper learning.
- **Professional Learning Social Network**—Smarter Balanced will host virtual Professional Learning Communities that cut across school, district, and state boundaries. This will greatly expand the learning and collaboration opportunities available to teachers to engage in cooperative professional development.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to the development of the work plan, particularly the members of our Formative Assessment Practices and Professional Learning Work Group, and the ongoing collaboration and support we have experienced with the CCSSO Formative Assessment SCASS. In the coming months, the Formative Assessment Practices and Professional Learning Work Group will sponsor the development of RFPs to carry out this work, which is expected to begin this fall. JW

### **Announcements**

Formative Assessment Master Work Plan approved—Governing States voted to approve the Formative Assessment Master Work Plan (Formative MWP) as amended to address feedback that some materials should be ready and available for teacher use at the beginning of the 2013-14 school year. The vote approved the six main activities of the Formative MWP and associated dates. The Formative MWP can be viewed here: <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/master-work-plans>.

Technology readiness data collection and best practices—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. To assist states during this critical period, Smarter Balanced has compiled best practices based on experiences to date with the Technology Readiness Tool. Please see email and attached document sent from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org) on June 19.

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

Executive Committee Co-Chair announcement—The Governing States elected 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. Nominations are by due Friday, June 29. You can find more 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 the most recent 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.

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).

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.

### **Upcoming Events**

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>.

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>.

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.

### **Resources**

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>.

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).

*Will children with limited computer skills—particularly those in the younger grades—be disadvantaged by an online assessment?*

Smarter Balanced is committed to developing an assessment system that accurately measures achievement and growth for all students—regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, economic status, or background. To achieve this goal, we must eliminate or minimize factors that could distract students from the ability to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. There are several steps the Consortium is taking to ensure that students are not disadvantaged by the technology of next-generation assessments:

- We are conducting cognitive lab research to learn how students across a range of grades approach and interact with different types of computer-administered items. This will inform the development of both assessment items and the test delivery system.
- Smarter Balanced has developed accessibility guidelines to ensure that items and tasks are designed to work well for as many students as possible, with appropriate accommodations available based on the needs of individual students. It is likely that some accommodations—such as the ability to highlight text—will be available to all students.
- Our approach to a balanced assessment system—that includes optional interim assessments—will allow students to become familiar with the test interface before taking the summative assessment.

While eliminating distractions and creating an accessible test interface are critical, it is important to remember that the Common Core State Standards emphasize proficiency with technology. For example, the 4th grade writing standard calls for students to “demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.” Administering assessments by computer is a part of ensuring that schools and teachers can measure mastery of the full range of the standards.

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