

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 72

Week ending Friday, July 6, 2012

Top News This Week

- Summative assessment decision summary
- Proficiency-Based Learning Task Force update
- Webinar on online Braille test interface announced
- Training materials for item writers and reviewers on website
- ICCS summer meeting registration is now open

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. I am pleased to announce an exciting new resource available on the Smarter Balanced website. As part of Contract-08 Participation and Training Materials, Consortium work groups collaborated with the contractor to develop online trainings that will be used this summer by educators participating in the item/task writing and review.

The training modules—covering background on the Consortium, assessment design principles, and detailed information about item and performance task development—are now available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/item-writing-and-review/>. The modules are presented in three formats: a PowerPoint presentation with notes; a streaming presentation with narration that can be viewed online; and a downloadable audio/video presentation.

While the trainings will help writers and reviewers get up to speed on the assessment system, they are also helpful resources for member states when communicating about the Consortium's innovative approach to items and performance tasks, as well as how the item/task specifications and review guidelines will shape the assessments.

With item development for the Pilot Test now underway, this summer is a perfect time to reconnect with key stakeholders about our progress. Over the next couple weeks, Consortium staff and advisors will present at a variety of conferences and events across the country.

Next week, Jaci King and I will host a reception for member states at the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) Annual Meeting in Seattle. Jaci and Rich Pattenaude, one of our regional senior higher education consultants, will also participate in a panel discussion on assessing college readiness and provide an update on our work.

In addition, I will travel to Atlanta for the annual meeting of the Education Commission of the States to

present as part of a panel on next-generation assessments. I will also attend the National Forum on Educational Statistics—sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)—for a discussion with education data specialists.

I hope everyone enjoyed a fun and safe Independence Day. JW

Announcements

Summative assessment decision summary—A summary of key state decision points for the development of the summative assessment through 2014 is now available. Developed with input from state leads and Higher Education Leads, the document outlines the process for reaching consensus within the Consortium on issues such as achievement level descriptors, accommodations and accessibility policy, and the sustainability plan. The goal of the document is to help member states plan for major decisions and appropriately engage K-12 and higher education stakeholders. The timeline is available on the Smarter Balanced Collaboration Site at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/document-library>.

Proficiency-Based Learning Task Force update—The Proficiency-Based Learning Task Force held its first webinar on June 28, with 45 participants from 14 states as well as representatives from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Asia Society, and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The states had an opportunity to share state definitions of proficiency-based learning, explore commonalities across states, and start the discussion on overlaps with the developing Smarter Balanced assessment structure. The next webinar is scheduled for July 18 at 11:00 a.m. Pacific; during this webinar, participants will provide feedback on a draft outlining common definitions and implementation strategies across participating states. States interested in participating in this discussion that were not able to make the first webinar are welcome to join this next webinar. For more information, please contact the group facilitator, David Ruff, at druff@greatschoolspartnership.org.

Webinar on online Braille test interface—The Oregon Department of Education will present an information session about its online Braille test interface to the Consortium on July 20 from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Pacific. This information session will cover the process Oregon followed in developing the Braille interface, an overview of the test delivery format and Braille interface components, and a discussion of the lessons learned during implementation. An email will be sent from sbac@wested.org with details.

Training materials for item writers and reviewers on website— Training materials have been posted on the Smarter Balanced website to provide background on the item and performance task development process and to train writers and reviewers: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/item-writing-and-review/>

This summer and fall, Smarter Balanced will work with educators to develop assessment items and performance tasks in English language arts/literacy and mathematics for the Pilot Test of the assessment system in early 2013. Teachers have been recruited by Governing States to write and review items and performance tasks for content, bias/sensitivity, and accessibility. This work will be guided by the [Smarter Balanced item/task specifications and review guidelines](#).

ICCS summer meeting registration is now open—Registration is now open for CCSSO's Implementing the Common Core Standards (ICCS) summer meeting on August 16–17, 2012, in Seattle, Washington. This meeting will focus on building the capacity of state agencies to support classroom-level implementation of the Common Core State Standards in preparation for common assessments. Please refer to the email sent from meetings@ccsso.org on June 26. Contact the following CCSSO staff

members with any questions: Margaret Millar at margaretm@ccsso.org (agenda feedback), Michele Parks at michelep@ccsso.org (event logistics), or Renata Lewis at renatal@ccsso.org (ICCS membership or reimbursements).

State membership changes—South Carolina has officially become a Governing State in the Consortium.

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

Resources

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.

Will Smarter Balanced assessments be timed? If so, how will students with IEPs or other special needs be impacted?

The amount of time that students will work on the assessments will be defined in terms of “sessions.” The length of each session will be based on the amount of time it takes most students—90–95 percent of students—to complete that portion of the assessment. Certainly, there will be students who need additional time, and they will be afforded the opportunity to do so. Additional time to complete the assessment is one of many accommodations that will be available for students with special needs.

Member states are collaborating on an accessibility policy framework that will detail how a range of accommodations will be made available.

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Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

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