

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 75

Week ending Friday, July 27, 2012

Top News This Week

- Recording of online Braille webinar available
- Remember to register for the Collaboration Conference

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. This week, Smarter Balanced hosted a two-day meeting with our Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) in Denver, CO. These meetings allow us to address emerging issues involving the development of the assessment system and to seek input from national experts in test design, computer adaptive testing, assessment accommodations, and content.

We spent a good deal of time discussing the draft summative test blueprints, which provide detailed specifications for a student assessment. TAC members offered feedback on weighting and scoring issues, as well as future test blueprint simulation studies that will inform the development of assessment items and performance tasks.

The TAC also reviewed the proposed approach for the Pilot Test of the assessments in early 2013, including our approach to scaling (that's item calibration, comparison of measurement models, and vertical scaling for the assessment works), sampling design (that's sample size needed for analysis, forms design, and stratification plans—again, for the works), and recommendations for analysis of items and other features (including the kinds of questions we might be asking students and teachers about their experience in taking/administering the test, and the extent to which we might be able to provide some level of performance feedback to participating schools). Keep in mind, our plan is still to have the Pilot opportunity available to all classrooms in the Consortium. We will be articulating that plan to our state leads, through whom announcements and invitations will be forwarded to districts and schools.

We also had a presentation from Dr. Stephen Sireci (University of Massachusetts) with whom we have contracted to assist in the development of a research agenda for a Smarter Balanced validity framework. Dr. Sireci is in the early stages of his work with us, so the timing of the TAC meeting was fortuitous, affording him and us the opportunity to engage with our technical advisors on approaches to framing the valid uses of the assessment system we are developing.

Finally, we discussed our plans for developing achievement level descriptors (ALDs), which is getting underway with our recently awarded contract to CTB/McGraw-Hill. The ALDs are text statements that articulate the knowledge, skills, and abilities represented at different categories of performance on the Smarter Balanced assessments, including the college- and career-ready category for the high school assessment. Ultimately, they will describe how students are progressing toward mastery of the Common Core State Standards for teachers, parents, and policymakers. The development of ALDs is an important milestone, and we are committed to creating opportunities for input from a variety of stakeholders—including K-12, higher education, content experts, and partners. The contract with CTB/McGraw-Hill to help develop ALDs began just last week; Smarter Balanced will share a schedule for ALD review and feedback shortly.

I would like to thank our TAC for a productive meeting. Member states, technical advisors, and education experts all provide essential guidance toward the design of the assessments. The Consortium's work is stronger because of the expertise and commitment of our partners. JW

Announcements

Recording of online Braille webinar available—Holly Carter and Kathleen Vanderwall of the Oregon Department of Education discussed the state's online Braille test interface. This presentation covered 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. A recording of the webinar and the PowerPoint presentation can now be viewed at:

<https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/webinars/brailleinterfacewebinar--72012>.

Achievement level descriptors contract—The Consortium selected CTB/McGraw-Hill as the winner of RFP-12. CTB/McGraw-Hill will work with the Consortium to develop general and grade-specific achievement level descriptors (ALDs) in English language arts and literacy and mathematics (grades 3–8 and 11) for the Smarter Balanced summative assessments.

Upcoming Events

Collaboration Conference—Smarter Balanced is pleased to announce that registration is now available for the upcoming Collaboration Conference and Chiefs meeting, September 11–14, 2012, in St. Louis, MO. Invited participants have received an email invitation from sbac@wested.org with instructions on registration for the conference. Events during this collaboration meeting are role-specific, so please be certain of the session days you are signing up to attend. Please refer to the email invitation sent from sbac@wested.org on July 13. Once you have reviewed the invitation, if you have any questions regarding your attendance on a particular day, please check with the Project Management Partner (WestEd) at sbac@wested.org.

Resources

Recording of webinar by Complete College America available—Stan Jones, president of Complete College America (CCA), discussed CCA's new report on remediation and the role of the Common Core and Smarter Balanced in advancing the completion agenda. A recording of the July 18 webinar presentation can now be viewed at: <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/higher-education/higher-education-webinars>. CCA's recent report on remediation can be accessed at http://www.completecollege.org/state_data/.

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 Apps 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.

What is the appropriate use of the items and tasks included in the item specifications?

The item specifications and review documents are technical documents that contain a number of examples intended to guide writers and reviewers in the development of high-quality assessment items and performance tasks. They can be helpful to educators for understanding the various item types, as well as the appropriate level of difficulty at different grade ranges described by the Smarter Balanced Content Specifications and the Common Core State Standards. So, they are essentially illustrations of the kinds of items and tasks that the Consortium would like item developers to produce. However, they do not necessarily stand on their own as “exemplary” Smarter Balanced items and tasks. For that reason, items and tasks found in the item specifications are not intended to be given to students as practice questions, nor used by teachers as representing the full range of what the Smarter Balanced assessments will look like.

Smarter Balanced is working with educators from Governing States this summer and fall to develop items and performance tasks for the Pilot Test in early 2013. The development of these items and tasks is being informed by the cognitive labs, and they will be rigorously reviewed against the guidelines established in the item specifications. An early outcome of our item development will be sets of “Item and Task Samplers” for grades 3–5, 6–8, and high school. The posting of these samplers to the Smarter Balanced website, slated for early September, will be announced in the Weekly Update.

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Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

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