

## Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

### Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 76

Week ending Friday, August 3, 2012

#### Top News This Week

- Achievement level descriptors contract kick-off
- Reminder: Upcoming ICCS meeting in Seattle
- Remember to register for the Collaboration Conference
- Follow Smarter Balanced on Twitter

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.

#### From the Executive Director

Greetings. Over the past two years, something pretty incredible has happened. States from California to Maine have united behind a shared vision of a balanced assessment system that provides information and tools to improve teaching and learning.

Smarter Balanced member states are working collaboratively to develop assessments that measure the depth and breadth of the Common Core State Standards. Each day, hundreds of state representatives and educators are engaged in making Smarter Balanced a reality.

We often say that Smarter Balanced is a state-led consortium. That means that chief state school officers and Governing State leads direct policy and design decisions. It means that states have the opportunity to provide feedback on deliverables like content and item specifications, test blueprints, and achievement level descriptors (which kicked off with a planning meeting last week).

It also means that states are at the table from the beginning, creating RFPs and specifications for key components to meet their needs—such as the reports that will provide student results to teachers, administrators, and parents. Finally, it means that there are broad and meaningful opportunities for states to engage K-12 teachers and higher education faculty and to build consensus in the assessment system.

In my previous life as assessment director in Washington State, I worked with a talented staff to develop and administer our statewide assessments. I believe we did really good work. Yet we never had the resources—in terms of time, funding, and expertise—that are available through Smarter Balanced.

Collaboration at this scale provides an unprecedented opportunity to leverage state knowledge and best practices to drive innovation. As a Consortium, Smarter Balanced has buying power far beyond even the largest states, allowing us to create custom solutions when off-the-shelf products fall short.

Maintaining a state-led, consensus-based process is not always easy. Yet I believe that the Consortium's success and accomplishments would not have been possible any other way. JW

#### Announcements

Achievement level descriptors contract kick-off meeting—On August 1, leaders from the Consortium met with the Contract-12 vendor, CTB/McGraw-Hill, to discuss the process and schedule for developing the preliminary achievement level descriptors (ALDs) for grades 3–8 and 11 in ELA and mathematics. Attendees included co-chairs from the Validation and Psychometrics Work Group, the Consortium's

content leads for K-12 ELA and mathematics, and the Smarter Balanced lead for higher education. The development process will allow for multiple rounds of review by K-12 educators, representatives from higher education, work group members, and Governing States. In addition, over the next six months, CTB/McGraw-Hill will disseminate nomination forms for ALD development team members, conduct a drafting workshop, facilitate the review sessions, and reconcile feedback following reviews. The ALDs that emerge from this work will be used to guide decision-making about the item pool for the summative assessment and standard setting following field testing.

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](mailto:meetings@ccsso.org) on June 26. Contact the following CCSSO staff members with any questions: Margaret Millar at [margaretm@ccsso.org](mailto:margaretm@ccsso.org) (agenda feedback), Michele Parks at [michelep@ccsso.org](mailto:michelep@ccsso.org) (event logistics), or Renata Lewis at [renatal@ccsso.org](mailto:renatal@ccsso.org) (ICCS membership or reimbursements).

Follow Smarter Balanced on Twitter—Since launching in late 2011, the Smarter Balanced Twitter feed has gained more than 940 followers. Help us break the 1,000-follower mark. Follow @SmarterBalanced to get resources and links to the latest news about the Consortium.

### **Upcoming Events**

Collaboration Conference meeting—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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:sbac@wested.org).

### **Resources**

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>.

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 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](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).

*With development of the Smarter Balanced assessment system funded by the Race to the Top Assessment Program, why will there be a cost to states to administer the assessments?*

The federal grant covers the cost of developing the assessment system through September 2014. However, there are ongoing costs for administration, maintenance, and enhancements of the assessments, including:

- Support for administration and information technology during implementation (e.g., help desk support, software repair);
- Hand-scoring of items and tasks that cannot be scored through automated technologies; and
- Ongoing item/task development to refresh the item bank.

From the beginning, Smarter Balanced has been committed to leveraging technology to reduce costs and improve the quality and accessibility of the assessment system. When the Consortium developed the grant application, we engaged an independent, third-party consultant to estimate the per student operational costs. As we get closer to finalizing the design of the assessments, these figures will be revised. Member states and the Consortium's Sustainability Task Force will play a critical role in determining the future of Smarter Balanced and ensuring the assessment system is cost-effective.

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### **Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**

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