

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 77

Week ending Friday, August 10, 2012

Top News This Week

- **Webinar on National Procurement Opportunity for 1:1 Computing**
- **Development of comprehensive research agenda is underway**
- **Proficiency-Based Learning Task Force update**
- **August 14 All States virtual meeting open to work group members**

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 had the opportunity last week (along with PARCC) to present an update on the Consortium's progress to the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB). NAGB governs and sets policies for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The Board's ongoing research on college readiness is an important resource for our work, and NAGB has pledged to help the assessment consortia as we work to achieve comparability. My presentation is available on the Smarter Balanced website, and we will post a narrated version shortly:

<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Smarter-NAGB-Presentation-2012-08-03.pdf>.

This week, I traveled to Chicago for a day-long meeting of our Higher Education Leads and regional senior advisors, held in conjunction with the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) Higher Education Policy Conference. Jaci King convened leads from 21 states to review draft plans to engage faculty and administrators in the implementation of the Common Core and Smarter Balanced assessments. Participants discussed the progress of Common Core implementation in their states, and how the Consortium can help.

A large portion of the meeting was devoted to peer feedback on the draft plans, which allowed participants to share best practices and advice across states to address the challenging work ahead. Over the next few weeks, leads will revise and expand these plans. With assistance from the Consortium's five regional senior advisors, states will begin implementing their plans this fall.

We also discussed the process for higher education engagement in drafting achievement level descriptors, which will kick off with a workshop in early October. Higher education faculty, K-12 teachers, work group members, and grade-level and content experts will all be critical partners in this effort.

I want to share an important new report that examines current state spending on assessments

and the cost of adopting high-quality assessments. *Getting to Higher-Quality Assessments: Evaluating Costs, Benefits, and Investment Strategies*, produced by the Assessment Solutions Group, finds that the combined cost of state and local interim and summative assessments in English language arts and mathematics is about \$35-\$55 per pupil. The paper notes that a more unified system could result in savings to fund higher-quality assessments or other educational uses. The paper is online here: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/ASG-Affording-High-Quality-Assessments-2012-08-10.pdf>.

Finally, I want to highlight the update below regarding the Proficiency-Based Learning Task Force. This task force—initiated through the efforts of several states—is engaged in an important effort to explore proficiency-based learning in the context of the Common Core State Standards and aligned assessments. There are exciting implications for the future development and uses of the Smarter Balanced assessment system. I encourage states to participate in the upcoming Proficiency-Based Learning webinar on August 28. JW

Announcements

Webinar on National Procurement Opportunity for 1:1 Computing—Jeff Mao, Learning Technology Policy Director at the Maine Learning Technology Initiative, will present a webinar to the Consortium on Wednesday, August 22, from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. Pacific time, about the National Procurement Opportunity for 1:1 Computing. This informational session will cover the process for procurement, an overview of the existing model used in Maine, and a discussion of how 1:1 computing can provide insights into a possible strategy that could improve states' ability to support instruction and assessment with technology. Please see the August 8 email sent from sbac@wested.org for details.

Development of comprehensive research agenda is underway—Smarter Balanced contracted with Stephen Sireci, Ph.D. (of the University of Massachusetts) to develop a comprehensive research agenda and validation plan for the Consortium. Dr. Sireci will develop a validity framework that will inform Consortium decision-making about key assessment issues and ensure that system components are valid for their intended purposes. The comprehensive plan will include proposed process and outcome validation activities. More information can be found here: <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/document-library>

Proficiency-Based Learning Task Force update—The Proficiency-Based Learning Task Force has created a draft document outlining common definitions and implementation strategies across participating states. The task force reviewed this document for a second time on August 8, and the feedback is being used to undertake a crosswalk among the ideas of the task force, technical aspects and needs of state assessment systems, and the capacity and parameters of Smarter Balanced. This will result in a response to the participating states, which may help them address their specific needs. The task force's next webinar is scheduled for Tuesday, August 28, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Pacific time. For more information, please contact the group facilitator, David Ruff, at druff@greatschoolspartnership.org.

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 English language arts (ELA)/literacy 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 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.

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 for resources and links to the latest news about the Consortium.

Upcoming Events

August 14 All States meeting open to work group members—All work group members are invited to attend this virtual meeting. See August 10 email sent from sbac@wested.org for details.

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 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 June 26 email sent from meetings@ccsso.org. 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).

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 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 July 13 email invitation sent from sbac@wested.org. 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

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.

How will instructional practices and curricula be altered to align with new standards and assessments?

Smarter Balanced is guided by the belief that a balanced, high-quality assessment system can improve teaching and learning by providing information and tools for teachers and schools to help students succeed. Timely and meaningful assessment information can offer specific information about areas of performance so that teachers can follow up with targeted instruction, students can better target their own efforts, and administrators and policymakers can more fully understand what students know and can do, in order to guide curriculum and professional development decisions. The Smarter Balanced theory of action articulates this vision and is available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Smarter-Balanced-Theory-of-Action.pdf>.

In addition, states participating in Smarter Balanced will have access to professional development materials and instructional resources for teachers through a digital library. These tools are optional and can be used, as needed, to complement state curriculum supports to districts and teachers.

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