

**Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

**Issue 78**

**Week ending Friday, August 17, 2012**

Top News This Week

- **Recruitment is now open for state involvement in development of initial achievement level descriptors**
- **New accessibility and accommodations materials available**
- **Collaboration Conference registration extended until close of business on Tuesday, August 21**

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. Smarter Balanced state teams met this week in Seattle at CCSSO's Implementing the Common Core Standards (ICCS) convening. Smarter Balanced underwrites membership in ICCS for Governing States to build the capacity of state agencies in supporting classroom-level implementation of the Common Core State Standards in preparation for next-generation assessments. Tony Alpert provided an update on the progress of the Consortium and shared preliminary information from the Technology Readiness Tool. Many of the discussions and panels provided an opportunity for cross-state collaboration involving a range of topics, from policymaker and legislator engagement to developing new English language arts/literacy and mathematics curricula.**

**I am pleased to announce the availability of two documents created as part of the Accessibility and Accommodations Policies and Materials contract. These literature reviews summarize existing research on accessibility and accommodations for English language learners and students with disabilities. They are an important step in our development of an evidence-based approach to ensuring that the Smarter Balanced assessment system is accessible for all students. The documents can be accessed through the Collaboration Site (details below) and will be posted publicly shortly.**

**During the All States call, we discussed the Consortium's collaborative process for drafting initial achievement level descriptors (ALDs). Through September 7, member states can nominate English language arts and mathematics experts (including teachers, curriculum specialists, and instructional coaches) to participate in an ALD drafting workshop to be held on October 1–5. Higher education faculty will be nominated by state Higher Education Leads. A total of 53 participants representing K-12, higher education, and Common Core experts will attend the workshop to develop documents that summarize the knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of students at each achievement level in the Smarter Balanced assessment system.**

We recognize that not every state will have both K-12 and higher education representatives present at the drafting workshop. However, our review schedule is designed to allow member states to solicit feedback on the ALDs from state boards of education, teachers, and administrators during a two-month period from mid-November through mid-January. Smarter Balanced will also seek feedback from external partners and other interested stakeholders.

The ALD development process is an important milestone in our work. Reaching consensus on the descriptions of knowledge, skills, and abilities represented at different performance categories will provide a clear signal about the rigor and expectations of the Common Core and Smarter Balanced assessments. I look forward to the contributions of our member states and partners. JW

Announcements

**Recruitment for initial achievement level descriptors development**—The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium is seeking highly qualified K-12 educators with deep understanding of the Common Core State Standards in English language arts (ELA)/literacy and mathematics to support development of the Consortium’s initial achievement level descriptors (ALDs) for its summative assessments for grades 3–8 and 11. They will be joined by higher education faculty from across the nation. This panel of experts will convene at a workshop in Las Vegas, Nevada, on October 1–5 to develop draft grade-specific descriptors that summarize the knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of students at each achievement level. The draft ALDs developed at this meeting will serve as the basis for subsequent reviews.

Governing State leads or their designees are asked to nominate four (4) individuals for the K–12 group, two for ELA/literacy and two for mathematics, with the intent of ensuring that each Governing State will have at least one representative participating at the workshop. Please see the August 15 email sent from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org) for more details on providing nominees for consideration.

**New accessibility and accommodations materials available**—Two new documents produced as part of Contract-06 Accessibility and Accommodations Policies and Materials are now available. Literature Review of Testing Accommodations and Accessibility Tools for Students with Disabilities and Summary of Literature on Empirical Studies of the Validity and Effectiveness of Test Accommodations for ELLs: 2005–2012 were developed to guide the Consortium’s accessibility and accommodations policy development. They are available on the Collaboration Site at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/document-library>

**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](mailto: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](mailto:druff@greatschoolspartnership.org).

#### Upcoming Events

**Collaboration Conference meeting September 11–14 in St. Louis, MO**—The registration deadline has passed, but we are extending it until close of business on Tuesday, August 21. Please see the August 17 email sent from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org). Those who have registered will be contacted with hotel confirmation numbers and flight information.

#### Resources

**State spending report available**—*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>.

**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).

**Follow Smarter Balanced on Twitter**—Follow @SmarterBalanced for resources and links to the latest news about the Consortium.

**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).

*How will the Consortium engage K-12 and higher education in the development of achievement level descriptors?*

Smarter Balanced has developed an inclusive, collaborative process for drafting initial achievement level descriptors (ALDs) in collaboration with K-12 teachers, higher education faculty, and content experts. Governing States will nominate four K-12 educators—two for ELA/literacy and two for mathematics at various grade spans—to participate in an ALD drafting workshop in October. In addition, Higher Education Leads will nominate two faculty members (one with experience in ELA/literacy and one with experience in mathematics). From this group, a total of 53 representatives will be selected for the October workshop. Every Governing State will have at least one K-12 and one higher education representative participating in the workshop. Those not selected will have an early opportunity to review the draft ALDs.

Just as important as reaching consensus among member states on the ALDs is reaching consensus within states between K-12 and higher education. A two-month period from mid-November through mid-January will allow states to vet the ALDs with stakeholders at all levels.

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Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium  
WestEd—Project Management Partner  
[sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org)

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