

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 80

Week ending Friday, August 31, 2012

Top News This Week

- Executive Committee member election process launched
- RFP for Digital Library with Formative Assessment Practices and Professional Learning Resources for Educators (RFP-23) released to vendors
- Assessment Delivery Application Design Committee nominations sought
- Webinar on CCSS for mathematics announced

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. As summer comes to an unofficial close, Tony Alpert, Carissa Miller, Joseph Martineau, Mike Middleton, and I hosted the second annual site visit with program officers from the U.S. Department of Education. Over two days in Olympia, we discussed the Consortium's accomplishments, as well as our plan for the milestones ahead.

Our cooperative agreement with the Department depends on ongoing communication and transparency. In addition to annual site visits, we participate in monthly conference calls and frequent informal conversations about the development of the assessment system.

The Department's advice and counsel are critical to our work. In addition, the Consortium relies on the expertise of education researchers and assessment specialists. Earlier this month, Magda Chia, Director of Support for Under-Represented Students, had our first meetings with two newly-formed advisory committees—one for English language learners and one for students with disabilities.

Composed of national experts in student assessment, accommodations strategies, language acquisition, and disabilities, these panels provide feedback to Smarter Balanced staff, work groups, and contractors to ensure that the assessments provide valid, reliable, and fair measures of student achievement and growth toward college and career readiness. A full list of the advisory committee members is available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/about/advisory-committees/>.

During day-long meetings, the advisory committees reviewed the Consortium's approach to item development, accommodations and accessibility review, validity, and translation. The committees will continue to collaborate with Smarter Balanced through the end of 2012 supported by grant funding provided by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Additional information is available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/news/smarter-balanced-announces-advisory-committees-on-english-language-learners-and-students-with-disabilities/>.

Finally, I want to congratulate Magda. In the middle of arranging these meetings with our advisory committees, Magda successfully defended her dissertation for her Ph.D. in education, equity, and cultural diversity from the University of Colorado, Boulder. Magda brings a wealth of expertise in validity and fairness for diverse student populations to Smarter Balanced. In collaboration with member states, the Accessibility and Accommodations Work Group, and the advisory committees, Magda will help ensure the assessment system effectively serves the needs of all students.

Have a relaxing and safe Labor Day weekend. JW

Announcements

Executive Committee member election process launched—K-12 state leads: Per the Consortium's governance model, Executive Committee (EC) member positions are filled on a rotating basis. Nominees are currently being sought for two EC positions and for one of the two EC Co-Chair positions. The new members will fill positions currently held by Joseph Martineau (co-chair), Dan Hupp (at-large member), and Deb Sigman (at-large member), all with terms starting October 1, 2012, and ending September 30, 2014.

All nominees must come from a Governing State and have approval from their Chief State School Officer indicating support for participation. Anyone can nominate a candidate, and individuals can nominate themselves. Nominations close on Wednesday, September 12. Once the slate of nominees is finalized, the Governing State leads will vote to select the new EC Co-Chair and two EC Members. Please see the August 27 email sent from sbac@wested.org for details.

The RFP for the Digital Library with Formative Assessment Practices and Professional Learning Resources for Educators (RFP-23) has been released to vendors—Proposals are due October 15, 2012, to develop and implement 1) a Digital Library technology application; 2) Smarter Balanced–developed classroom instruction and professional learning resources and an inventory of currently available resources; and 3) the recruitment of 2,700+ educators across member states for State Networks of Educators to participate in the development of the technology, the resources, and the training process. The RFP is available at <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Jobs-Contracts.aspx>.

Assessment Delivery Application Design Committee nominations sought—State leads and work groups: The Technology Approach Work Group invites states and work groups to nominate members to join the Smarter Balanced Assessment Delivery Application Design Committee. This is a unique opportunity to contribute to the development of the Consortium's open-source, online, computer adaptive testing system, a system that is likely to fundamentally change the education marketplace. Design Committee members will contribute to one of three streams of work:

- Data content and flows
- Administrator interface
- Student interface

State leads are encouraged to nominate experts from their school districts who serve on assessment advisory committees. The assessment delivery application is a critical development project for Smarter Balanced. Decisions made will provide substantial benefits to member states, defining the testing experience for administrators and students for years to come. The deadline for nominations has been extended to September 7. Please see the August 30 email sent from sbac@wested.org for details.

Webinar on mathematics—Student Achievement Partners' Jason Zimba and Beth Cocuzza as well as Smarter Balanced Director of Mathematics Shelbi Cole will present an informational webinar about the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (CCSSM) to the Consortium on September 7 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Pacific. The webinar will provide a deeper understanding of the standards with a focus on Smarter Balanced and its development of assessments aligned to the CCSSM, and will provide an overview of the CCSSM's implications for assessment, including criteria for evaluating CCSS-aligned items and tasks. State leads are encouraged to distribute this invitation to interested staff within their department. State-level mathematics curriculum and assessment specialists are encouraged to attend. Please see the August 23 email sent from sbac@wested.org for details.

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 28 reminder email sent from sbac@wested.org for more details on providing nominees for consideration.

ASCD launches Common Core resources website—EduCore (<http://educore.ascd.org>), a new website developed by ASCD, provides easy access to evidence-based tools and resources to help middle and high school educators implement the Common Core State Standards. The site includes videos and instructional resources from the Literacy Design Collaborative and the Shell Centre for Mathematical Education. Registered users can save their searches, organize tools, and annotate resources. In the future, ASCD intends to expand the number of mathematics formative assessment lessons and sample literacy modules.

Upcoming Events

Collaboration Conference meeting September 11–14 in St. Louis, MO—Registration for the Collaboration Conference has closed. Registered participants who have yet to receive confirmation of their hotel and flight information should contact Karrie Guss at karrie.guss@k12.wa.us.

Resources

Quarterly Program Report is available—The quarterly project report for the period ending June 31, 2012, can be found at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Quarterly-Report-June-2012.pdf>. The report details the Consortium's progress in key areas and priorities for the next three months.

National Procurement Opportunity for 1:1 Computing Webinar—On August 22, Jeff Mao, Learning Technology Policy Director at the Maine Learning Technology Initiative, presented a webinar to the Consortium about the National Procurement Opportunity for 1:1 Computing. This webinar covered the process for procurement, an overview of existing model used in Maine, and a discussion of the how the 1:1 approach can provide insights into a possible strategy that could improve states' ability to support instruction and assessment with technology. The webinar recording is available on the Collaboration Site under the Webinars tab.

Contacting Smarter Balanced—The Smarter Balanced external website (www.smarterbalanced.org) showcases the innovative work of the Consortium and provides frequent updates on activities, milestones, and events. Visitors can submit questions or reach Smarter Balanced staff at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/contact-us/>. Consortium members may contact sbac@wested.org for information on upcoming meetings and events.

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.

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.

Will Smarter Balanced assessments be translated into other languages?

As part of the Race to the Top Assessment Program application, the Consortium made a commitment to translate the mathematics interim and summative assessments into five languages—including Spanish and sign language. The Consortium is developing a translations framework to guide this work.

It is important to note, however, that translation is just one way to help ensure that the assessments accurately measure the knowledge and skills of English language learners. Smarter Balanced is focused on including construct-relevant language in our math items, which minimizes the appearance of construct-irrelevant language use. All assessment items and performance tasks will go through a bias and sensitivity review. In addition, the assessments will include accessibility and accommodations options that will help English language learners while taking the assessment.

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Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

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