

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 83

Week ending Friday, September 21, 2012

Top News This Week

- Executive Committee election voting period closes on Monday, 9/24
- Regional State Leadership meetings planned for December 2012
- Collaboration Conference materials available

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. Smarter Balanced is preparing to release a selection of assessment items and performance tasks in English language arts/literacy and mathematics in early October through our website. For the first time, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders will be able to interact with items and tasks developed or adapted to meet the specifications of the Consortium.

Our goal in making these sample items and tasks available is to illustrate the rigor and complexity of the Smarter Balanced assessment system. For educators, parents, and policymakers, the sample items and tasks offer concrete examples of knowledge and skills—at each grade level—that students are expected to master under the Common Core State Standards.

The sample items and tasks represent just a fraction of the more than 10,000 items and tasks under development for the Pilot Test beginning in February 2013. While not every standard or assessment target is represented, they provide an early look at the item types that will be included in the assessment system—including technology-enhanced items that take advantage of computer administration.

It is important to note that the sample items and tasks are presented in an online portal that does not include accessibility tools and accommodations options under development for the operational assessment system in the 2014-15 school year. Over the next several months—guided by the Consortium's Accessibility and Accommodations Work Group and advisory committees for English language learners and students with disabilities—Smarter Balanced will finalize the accessibility tools and accommodations options available through the test delivery system.

During the past two weeks, I have had the opportunity to preview the sample items and tasks with a variety of audiences. It is tremendously satisfying to be able to show off some of the innovations that advance our ability to measure college and career readiness. I also recognize that this release provides a chance to solicit feedback that will strengthen our item development process. A link to submit feedback online will be available as soon as the items are released, and I hope you will share your comments.

Putting this project together required expert guidance from Smarter Balanced staff and countless partners. I want to acknowledge Student Achievement Partners for their valuable feedback and thank everyone who contributed to developing and refining this important tool. JW

Announcements

Executive Committee election voting period closes on Monday, 9/24—Governing State K-12 leads are requested to submit their votes for Executive Committee positions that will run through September 30,

2014. 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 votes must be received by 11:59 p.m. local time Monday, September 24. Biographies of the candidates can be found on the Collaboration Site at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/home/ec-election>. Please see the 9/17 email sent from sbac@wested.org for details.

Regional state leadership meetings planned for December 2012—To facilitate leadership discussions within and among states about the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the Smarter Balanced assessment system, the Consortium is sponsoring regional leadership meetings this December. This will be an opportunity for Chief State School Officers, SHEEOs, or other state higher education leaders and governors' education policy aides to discuss in a small-group setting the critical issues confronting states as they move toward full-scale implementation of the standards and assessments. Please see the September 20 email from sbac@wested.org for more details.

Collaboration conference materials available—Materials handed out during the Collaboration Conference have been posted on the Collaboration Site here: <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/meetings/collaboration-conference-materials>.

Upcoming Events

Chiefs meeting—The next meeting of the member state Chiefs will occur via webinar on Monday, September 24, at 1:00 p.m. Pacific.

Resources

Mathematics webinar recording available—On September 7, Student Achievement Partners' Jason Zimba and Smarter Balanced Director of Mathematics Shelbi Cole presented an informational webinar about the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (CCSSM) to the Consortium. The webinar provided a deeper understanding of the standards with a focus on Smarter Balanced and its development of assessments aligned to the CCSSM, and provided an overview of the CCSSM's implications for assessment, including criteria for evaluating CCSS-aligned items and tasks. The webinar recording is available at the following link: <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/webinars/smarterbalancedccssformathematicswebinar>.

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.

How will visitors access the sample items and performance tasks?

The Smarter Balanced sample items and performance tasks will be accessed through SmarterBalanced.org beginning early October. The samples will be displayed in a simulated test platform that will allow users to interact with and score selected items and tasks. The site will be compatible with common Internet browsers, and a full list of compatible browsers will be available. In addition, we are working with software developers to convert graphics into a format that is compatible with popular tablet devices. Regardless of the requirements to access the sample items and tasks, a variety of eligible computers and tablet devices will be compatible with the operational assessment in the 2014-15 school year. Additional information is available in the Smarter Balanced new hardware purchasing guidelines available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/technology/>.

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Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd—Project Management Partner

sbac@wested.org

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