

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

**Issue 84**

**Week ending Friday, September 28, 2012**

Top News This Week

- **Governing States re-elect Martineau, Sigman, Hupp to Executive Committee**
- **Sample item release training webinar on October 3**
- **Technology Readiness data collection window closes September 30**
- **Translation framework 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. Access to this website is currently limited to Consortium state department of education officials and their delegates. For news and other important information related to Consortium activities, we encourage individuals to visit our public website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org> and sign up for the monthly newsletter by clicking on the Stay Connected link located at the top of the homepage.

From the Executive Director

**Greetings. Next week, K-12 educators and higher education faculty nominated by Governing States will join content experts and Smarter Balanced staff for a five-day workshop in Las Vegas to develop preliminary achievement level descriptors (ALDs) for the Consortium.**

**The goal is to develop draft grade-specific descriptors that will summarize the knowledge, skills, and processes that will be expected of students at each achievement level. This workshop will lead to the development of a system of ALDs that will set high-level expectations for the assessments and will also provide guidance to item writers and standard setters.**

**Later this fall and winter, the draft ALDs will be available for review. This extended feedback period will allow member states to review the draft ALDs with state boards of education, teachers, and administrators. Smarter Balanced will also seek feedback from external partners and other interested stakeholders.**

**More information on the ALD development process is available on the Smarter Balanced website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Smarter-Balanced-ALD-Overview.pdf>. I am eager to see the results and progress made at this important convening.**

**Finally, I want to highlight a new series of white papers from Digital Learning Now, a national campaign that promotes policies to create high-quality educational opportunities through technology for all students. The first report focuses on funding the shift to digital learning and includes case studies of states that have expanded access to computers. I encourage you to take a glance as it features many issues relevant to our work: <http://digitallearningnow.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/DLN-Smart-Series-Paper-1-Final.pdf>. JW**

## Announcements

**Governing States re-elect Martineau, Sigman, Hupp to Executive Committee**—The Governing States have re-elected Joseph Martineau as co-chair, and Dan Hupp and Deb Sigman as at-large members of the Executive Committee. The terms of the positions Joseph, Dan, and Deb are filling run through September 30, 2014. The Consortium is excited to have Joseph, Dan, and Deb continue their service on the committee, and we look forward to continuing to benefit from their expertise as we carry out the development of the assessment system.

**Sample item release training webinar**—Smarter Balanced will host a webinar on October 3 to discuss the upcoming release of sample items and performance tasks. Executive Director Joe Willhoft will preview the variety of item types that will be included in the assessment system, walk through the demonstration website where they are housed, and lead a discussion on how to effectively communicate the release with stakeholders. More information will be provided early next week.

**Technology Readiness data collection**—The second data collection window for the Technology Readiness Tool closes on September 30. At that time, a snapshot will be taken of all the information submitted by schools, and the second readiness analysis will be completed.

**Translation framework available**—Smarter Balanced commissioned the development of a framework to guide translation of the mathematics assessments for English language learners (ELLs). In addition to addressing the diverse linguistics backgrounds of ELLs, the framework proposes several translation accommodations options and makes recommendations for successfully implementing each alternative in the assessment system. The framework is available on the Consortium's website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Translation-Accommodations-Framework-for-Testing-ELL-Math.pdf>.

**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](mailto:sbac@wested.org) for more details.

## Resources

**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>.

**Contacting Smarter Balanced**—The Smarter Balanced external website ([www.smarterbalanced.org](http://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](mailto: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](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).

*What are achievement level descriptors (ALDs)?*

Achievement level descriptors (ALDs) are text statements that articulate the knowledge, skills, and abilities represented at different categories of performance on the Smarter Balanced assessments, including the college- and career-ready category for the high school assessment. They describe how students are progressing toward mastery of the Common Core State Standards and provide clear explanations of student performance for policymakers, educators, and parents.

Smarter Balanced has developed an inclusive, collaborative process for drafting initial ALDs in collaboration with K-12 teachers and higher education faculty nominated by member states, as well as content experts. Draft ALDs will be available for feedback during a four-month comment period later this year. Preliminary ALDs are expected to be finalized by March 2013 by Governing States.

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