

## Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

### Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 85

Week ending Friday, October 5, 2012

#### Top News This Week

- Sample item preview to K-12 and Higher Education State Leads; communications materials posted on Collaboration Site
- Public release of sample items and performance tasks on October 9
- Sample item release webinars for higher education scheduled on October 16 and 31
- Collaboration Conference feedback requested

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. October 1 marked the two-year anniversary of the beginning of the Race to the Top Assessment Program grant—we are officially at the halfway mark. Smarter Balanced has accomplished a great deal in those two years, and next week I will review our progress.

This week, I wanted to provide a brief report on the achievement level descriptors (ALDs) drafting workshop in Las Vegas. The event brought together more than 60 K-12 and higher education content experts and faculty to develop a first draft of ALDs for the summative assessment in grades 3–8 and 11. I participated in the discussion on Monday as we tackled the college readiness definition and the policy ALDs—general descriptors that articulate the goals and rigor for the final performance standards.

I want to acknowledge and thank the many Smarter Balanced staff, state volunteers, and representatives from CTB and the College Board who worked to ensure the sessions were productive and successful. I wasn't able to stay for the entire convening, so the following are a few highlights from the facilitators in Las Vegas:

"Workshop participants brought energy, dedication, and diverse expertise to the task of crafting the ALDs, absorbing themselves in discussions about how students show evidence of learning. They worked very hard to accurately describe achievement levels with high fidelity to the Common Core State Standards. Panelists report they are leaving with a clearer understanding of the Common Core State Standards and how they show up in student work.

"In addition, it was thrilling to see the level of close collaboration between the K-12 and higher education participants. Listening to the conversations, it would have been difficult for an observer to determine which participants came from which sector. Forging stronger working relationships between K-12 and higher education is an important element of successful implementation of the Common Core and Smarter Balanced, so we were particularly pleased with this aspect of the workshop.

"Moving forward, CTB and the College Board will compile the results from the workshop into a draft document that will be made available to states on November 12. Shortly after Thanksgiving, the draft will be made available to the general public for review and comment. The public review

period will close in mid-January 2013, and, after one more round of state review in February, we hope that the Consortium will vote on the initial ALDs in mid-March. Because the 11th-grade achievement levels are of such importance to higher education, Smarter Balanced will ask states to confirm that votes reflect a mutually agreed-upon position.”

Finally, I would like to highlight an interesting paper that focuses on comparisons between the performance of the United States and other countries on international student assessments. The report includes comparisons between OECD countries on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) assessments. These trends are important for us to consider as we engage in standard setting in 2014. No Country Left Behind: Rhetoric and Reality of International Large-Scale Assessment can be accessed here: <http://www.ets.org/r/silverpop/20753/pdf/?WT.dcsvid=Nzq0NjU0NzgyNAS2>. JW

## **Announcements**

Sample item preview to K-12 and Higher Education State Leads—Smarter Balanced is pleased to provide preview access to sample items and performance tasks in advance of the public release on October 9, 2012. State leads can refer to the October 3 email sent from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org) for login information to the sample items and tasks website, as well as communications resources. As a reminder, this preview is intended for state agency staff; the public release will occur on October 9.

Communications materials are available on the Collaboration Site at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/communications/sample-item-release>. These include suggested talking points, FAQs, a link to the recorded training webinar with Joe Willhoft, and a template presentation to assist state leads in discussing the sample items and performance tasks with stakeholders. A webinar was held with state public information officers (PIOs) on Thursday, October 4.

Public release of sample items and performance tasks on October 9—Starting October 9, the sample items and performance tasks can be accessed from the Smarter Balanced website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/sample-items-and-performance-tasks/>. Help desk support will be provided through November 2 during the hours of 7:00 a.m. eastern and 8:00 p.m. eastern Monday through Friday.

Sample item release webinars for higher education scheduled on October 16 and 31—Smarter Balanced will host webinars for higher education faculty on the sample math and ELA items on October 16 and 31, respectively. Information on how to access the webinars will be sent from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org).

Collaboration Conference feedback requested—A brief survey was sent to attendees of the September Collaboration Conference in St. Louis. Please see the October 3 email sent from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org).

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.

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>.

## **Resources**

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 the technology requirements for viewing the Smarter Balanced sample items and tasks?*

The sample items and performance tasks are compatible with desktop and laptop computers with the following Internet browsers:

- Firefox 3.6 or newer
- Internet Explorer 8 or newer
- Chrome 18 or newer
- Safari 4.1 or newer

In addition, Android and iPad tablets with 9.5-inch screens (10-inch class) or larger are supported with the following Internet browsers:

- Chrome 18 or newer (Android)
- Safari 4.1 or newer (iPad)

It is important to note that these specifications do not reflect the minimum technology requirements for the operational Smarter Balanced assessment system in the 2014-15 school year. More information on the Consortium's new hardware purchasing guidelines is available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/technology/>.

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