

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 87

Week ending Friday, October 19, 2012

Top News This Week

- Webinar on CCSS for mathematics Part II scheduled for November 15
- Webinar on CCSS for ELA/literacy scheduled for October 25
- Webinar on ELA sample items for higher education faculty scheduled for October 31

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. This week, a coalition of 27 education, business, and philanthropic organizations known as the Career Readiness Partner Council released a short paper outlining a broad vision for integrating education and workforce preparation. The statement establishes that career readiness must foster adaptability and a commitment to lifelong learning, along with a mastery of key academic, technical, and workplace knowledge, skills, and dispositions that vary from one career to another and change over time. The goal of the Council is to jump-start a conversation among policymakers, educators, and advocates about what steps are needed to prepare all students to be both college- and career-ready.

Throughout the year, Director of Higher Education Collaboration Jaci King participated in the Council's work on behalf of Smarter Balanced. In September, Governing States voted to become a supporter of this document. The Consortium is committed to engaging with the field to ensure that the assessments are part of an integrated system that helps prepare all students to succeed in college and careers.

To be clear: Our charge is to develop a next-generation assessment system aligned to the Common Core State Standards in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. We do this while fully realizing that academic readiness—as defined by the Common Core—is only one part of a more comprehensive set of knowledge and skills that contribute student readiness for college and career. Other knowledge, skills, and dispositions include: work habits, persistence, and postsecondary planning. Smarter Balanced member states are deeply committed to tracking the research that can further our understanding of the kinds of policies and practices that promote college and career readiness. We think continued engagement in conversations with colleagues like the Career Readiness Partner Council will be beneficial for all students.

Implementation of the Common Core provides a perfect opportunity to rethink how students experience technical training and real-world workplace experiences. Smarter Balanced will continue to engage with business organizations, career and technical educators, and policymakers as we work to establish achievement level descriptors, set standards, and move toward implementation in the 2014-15 school year. Learn more about the Career Readiness Partner Council at <http://www.careerreadynow.org/>. JW

Announcements

Webinar on CCSS for mathematics – Part II—Student Achievement Partners' Jason Zimba and 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 November 15 from 12:30 p.m. to

2:00 p.m. Pacific (please note the new date). The objective of the webinar is to practice identifying three shifts called for by the Standards in assessment items through analysis of examples and non-examples. State-level mathematics curriculum and assessment specialists are encouraged to attend. Please see the October 16 email sent from sbac@wested.org for details.

Webinar on CCSS for ELA/literacy—Barb Kapinus of Smarter Balanced and Sue Pimentel and Jennifer Dean of Student Achievement Partners will present an informational webinar about the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for ELA/literacy to the Consortium on October 25 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Pacific. The webinar will provide a deeper understanding of the CCSS for ELA/literacy, with a focus on Smarter Balanced and its development of assessments aligned to the CCSS. It will include an overview of the CCSS's implications for assessment and the criteria for evaluating CCSS-aligned items and passages. Please see the October 15 email sent out from sbac@wested.org for details.

Sample item release webinars for higher education—Smarter Balanced will host a second webinar for higher education faculty on the sample items. On October 31, the sample ELA items will be presented as a complement to the October 16 webinar on sample math items. Please refer to the October 9 email sent from sbac@wested.org for more details on how to register for the webinar.

A recording of the October 16 webinar on the sample math items is available here: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/resources-events/webinars/>.

Public release of sample items and performance tasks—The Smarter Balanced sample items and performance tasks were released on Tuesday, October 9. At the end of the second week, we have had more than 84,000 visitors to the website. Public interest continues to be high, as indicated by numerous articles, blog posts, and a high volume of social-media activity.

The sample assessment items and performance tasks can be viewed on the Smarter Balanced website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/sample-items-and-performance-tasks/>. Help desk support will be provided through November 2, between the hours of 7:00 a.m. eastern time and 8:00 p.m. eastern time, Monday through Friday.

Supporting communications materials are available on the Collaboration Site at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/communications/sample-item-release> to assist state leads and PIOs in discussing the sample items and performance tasks with stakeholders. These materials include suggested talking points, responses to FAQs, a link to the recorded training webinar with Joe Willhoft, and a Sample Items PowerPoint template presentation.

Upcoming Events

Regional leadership meetings—To facilitate leadership discussions within and among states about the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the Smarter Balanced assessment system, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium is sponsoring a series of regional leadership meetings this December. This will be an opportunity for Chief State School Officers, State Higher Education Executive Officers or other state higher education leaders, and governors' education policy advisors to discuss in a small-group setting the critical issues confronting states as they move toward full-scale implementation of the standards and assessments. Invitations with registration information will be sent from sbac@wested.org next week.

Webinar for educators—The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) will host a webinar by Jason Zimba and Beth Cocuzza of Student Achievement Partners on October 22 at 12:30 p.m. Pacific time. The webinar is specifically for state and district curriculum leaders, education policymakers, and teachers to better understand the K-8 Publishers' Criteria for the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics. Register here: <https://ccsso.webex.com/ccsso/onstage/g.php?t=a&d=711157134>

Resources

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 the Smarter Balanced content specifications be updated?

Earlier this year, Smarter Balanced Governing States approved content claims in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. The claims are the central, organizing themes of the content specifications, and can be found in those documents. The purpose of the content specifications was to analyze the Common Core State Standards through an assessment lens, to make declarations about what the Smarter Balanced assessments will say about student achievement, and to describe the kinds of evidence we will look for as manifestations of that achievement.

The Smarter Balanced item/task specifications—which define the characteristics of items and tasks that will appear on the Smarter Balanced assessments—were based on the content specifications. Our service providers are using the item/task specifications to write items and tasks for the Pilot Test that will occur this spring. We have encouraged item writers to make note of ways to strengthen and clarify the item/task specifications, and they can be viewed as a somewhat dynamic set of documents that we will continue to improve.

However, the content specifications, being the basis for the item/task specifications, will remain in their current form through the development of the 2014-15 assessment. Once we complete our first or second year of implementation, it may be appropriate to revisit the content specifications. At that time, we will have gathered substantial information on student performance, and we should know much more about how items and tasks work in an online environment, as well as what we can expect from different scoring strategies. This new information will certainly inform the statements of the kinds of evidence we seek in our assessments.

Overviews of the current content claims are available on the Consortium's website:

- ELA/literacy: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Smarter-Balanced-ELA-Literacy-Claims.pdf>

- Mathematics: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Smarter-Balanced-Mathematics-Claims.pdf>

--

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd—Project Management Partner

sbac@wested.org

aa_G