

**Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

**Issue 88**

**Week ending Friday, October 26, 2012**

Top News This Week

- **Registration for regional leadership meetings has opened**
- **Information about upcoming Smarter Balanced Pilot Test**
- **Smarter Balanced Collaboration Conference—reminder to submit travel reimbursement requests**

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.** Earlier this month, Smarter Balanced released a set of nearly 50 sample items and performance tasks online. The samples provide an early look at the types of questions students will encounter on the assessments, and they also demonstrate what an online test delivery system can look like. Since the launch, more than 100,000 people have visited the Smarter Balanced website—more than five times our typical traffic. We have also received about 150 comments and questions. It is clear that teachers, policymakers, and others in the education field are eager to learn more about the assessments and see concrete examples of items and tasks.

I want to thank the many Smarter Balanced member states and partners that have helped spread the word by posting information and links online, hosting webinars and presentations, and working with the media. This outreach is critical, and it will continue to fuel interest in the sample items and tasks in the coming months.

In addition, Smarter Balanced is hosting two webinars on the sample items and tasks for higher education faculty, administrators, and other interested stakeholders. We are also working with CCSSO on two webinars about the sample items and tasks hosted by the 2012 National Teacher of the Year Rebecca Mieliwocki. Additional details on these events are available below.

The release of the sample items and tasks is just one of the milestones on the calendar this fall. Governing States will soon be asked to approve the preliminary summative assessment design, which encompasses test length, reporting categories, and the test blueprint. This process is expected to be complete by Thanksgiving, and it will allow us to move forward on key issues, such as determining the number of testing sessions and the modeling of operational costs.

In early November, Smarter Balanced will provide information about the recruitment of schools for the Pilot Test of the assessment system beginning in February. Preliminary achievement level descriptors (ALDs) are under development and will begin a lengthy review in mid-November. Finally, minimum technology requirements for existing computers in schools will be available before the end of the year.

These are exciting developments, and the Smarter Balanced assessment system is quickly moving from plan to reality. I encourage you to stay informed and engage with your stakeholders leading up to these important milestones. JW

#### Announcements

**Registration for regional leadership meetings has opened**—Invitations have been sent out for the Regional Leadership Meetings. These meetings 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 Common Core State Standards and the Smarter Balanced assessment system. Please refer to the emails sent on October 22 and 23 from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org) for more details on how to register. The registration deadline has been extended to Friday, November 9.

**Smarter Balanced Pilot Test information**—By November 5, 2012, state leads will receive information about the Smarter Balanced Pilot Test scheduled for February 2013. The Consortium requests the help of state leads in disseminating this information, as well as coordinating with state leadership, and encouraging the participation of schools in the Pilot Test. A high-level overview of the Pilot Test opportunity was presented during the All States meeting on October 23, 2012, and is available on the Smarter Balanced Collaboration Site under the Meetings tab.

**Collaboration Conference reminder to submit travel reimbursement request**—Thank you to those of you who have already submitted reimbursement requests for your participation in the Smarter Balanced Collaboration Conference in St. Louis. To those of you who have not already done so, please complete and submit your request as soon as possible. Instructions on how to submit reimbursement requests were attached to the email sent from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org) on October 25. If you have questions, please contact Karrie Guss at [karrie.guss@k12.wa.us](mailto:karrie.guss@k12.wa.us).

**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](mailto: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](mailto: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/>

## Upcoming Events

**Chiefs meeting**—The next meeting of the member state Chiefs will occur via webinar on Monday, October 29, at 1:00 p.m. Pacific.

**TAC meeting**—The next meeting of the Smarter Balanced Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will occur on December 12-13, 2012, in Las Vegas. As in the past, our member states are welcome to participate in person or virtually via live webinar. Those states wishing to participate in person may send one representative and will be required to use its own funds for transportation, lodging, per diem, and other expenses. If your state is planning to participate in person, please email [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org) as soon as possible so we can confirm that the meeting space will accommodate all participants.

**2012 National Teacher of the Year webinar about sample assessment items**—On November 9, CCSSO will host a webinar with 2012 National Teacher of the Year Rebecca Mieliwocki on the recently released Partnership for Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced sample assessment items in English language arts. Ms. Mieliwocki, a seventh grade English teacher, will offer her reactions and guidance to fellow teachers on what the new assessment items can illustrate about the Common Core State Standards and accompanying assessments that their students will be experiencing soon. The webinar will be held on Friday, November 9, from 11:00–12:00 p.m. Pacific. To register, please visit <https://ccsso.webex.com/ccsso/onstage/g.php?t=a&d=719177081>. An analogous webinar focused on mathematics will also occur at a later date.

## 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).

*Why are some of the English language arts/literacy sample items and tasks missing a reading passage?*

The sample English language arts/literacy items and performance tasks include a mixture of published and commissioned reading passages and sources. Smarter Balanced has not obtained permission to reprint copyrighted passages and source documents referenced in the sample items. As a result, several sample items and performance tasks—Planes on the Brain 1–3, Animal Defenses, and Garden—include only the citations for copyrighted material, rather than the complete text. For the operational assessment in the 2014-15 school year, Smarter Balanced intends to use primarily published passages—reflecting the emphasis in the Common Core on exposure to “high-quality, increasingly challenging literary and informational texts”—and the full text of these passages will be available to students.

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