

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 90

Week ending Friday, November 9, 2012

Top News This Week

- **Pilot Test information requested from state leads**
- **Webinar on draft Technology Strategy Framework and System Requirements Specifications**

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, I presented at the 2012 Education Trust conference in Washington, DC. Ed Trust is a national organization dedicated to closing the achievement gap and ensuring that all students have access to educational opportunity. Participants were especially interested in how next-generation assessments can go beyond simply meeting state and federal accountability requirements to providing information and tools that help teachers focus on the needs of under-represented students.

Each year at the conference, Ed Trust recognizes schools that successfully educate low-income students and students of color with its Dispelling the Myth Awards. One of the 2012 winners is Laurel Street Elementary School in Compton, California. More than three-quarters of the school's students come from low-income families, and nearly two-thirds are limited English proficient. Yet Laurel Street was named a California Distinguished School and boasts strong student achievement.

All of us are familiar with schools like Laurel Street, where teachers, administrators, and parents work together relentlessly to help students achieve, no matter what their background. Our challenge is to make sure all schools have access to the tools and resources to support their success. Next-generation assessments are one piece of an integrated education system centered on promoting college and career readiness for all students.

Over the next two years, schools in Smarter Balanced member states will have several opportunities to learn about the assessment system firsthand. Beginning in February, the Pilot Test will include several thousand items and performance tasks, giving the Consortium important information about how the items and tasks perform in a real-world setting. One of the main goals of the Pilot Test is to conduct initial scaling of items. Students will not receive scores, but they will be able to experience the test interface and responding to items online.

K-12 state leads received an overview of the process for the Pilot Test this week (additional information is below). I hope all member states will reach out to superintendents and principals to help them understand the timing of the Pilot Test and encourage them to participate. The more familiar students and teachers are with the developing assessment system, the better prepared they will be for implementation in the 2014-15 school year.

Please note that the Consortium is closed on Monday, November 12, in observance of Veteran's Day. JW

Announcements

Pilot Test information requested from state leads—K-12 state leads are requested to supply the timing of their statewide testing windows no later than Wednesday, November 14, so that the Consortium can do its best to avoid overlapping statewide and Pilot testing dates when scheduling Pilot testing windows with schools. Please see the November 7 email sent from sbac@wested.org for more details.

As a reminder, the Pilot testing window is from February 20 to May 10, 2013, and all schools within the Consortium are encouraged to volunteer to participate. The Consortium will select a sample of schools to participate in the Pilot based on pre-determined demographic criteria to ensure that the Pilot is carried out with a sample that is representative of Consortium states. Schools selected as part of the scientific sample will be assigned a two-week window during the February to May timeframe. To the degree possible, window assignment will be scheduled to avoid extensive overlap with state testing. Schools that volunteer but are not selected as part of the scientific sample will be able to administer a released set of Pilot Test items. Several communications will be sent out in the coming weeks in preparation for the Pilot.

Webinar on draft Smarter Balanced Technology Strategy Framework and System Requirements Specifications—On Tuesday, November 13 at 9:00 a.m. Pacific time, Smarter Balanced will host a webinar overview and discussion of the draft Smarter Balanced Technology Strategy Framework and System Requirements Specifications document. This document includes the minimum specifications for the 2014-15 Smarter Balanced Assessment within the context of collective technology planning among the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium member states. State Technology Readiness Coordinators (SRCs) and State CIOs are encouraged to attend. Please see the November 1 email sent from sbac@wested.org for details.

Webinar for K-12 and Higher Education State Leads on ALDs—On Thursday, November 15, at 11:00 a.m. Pacific time, Smarter Balanced will host a webinar on the status of the Initial Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs) developed during the October 2012 workshop. The webinar will provide an overview of the ALD draft materials, as well as information on how to submit feedback. The initial ALD draft materials will be posted prior to the webinar. Details will be available next week from sbac@wested.org.

Upcoming Events

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 Thursday, November 15, from 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Pacific time (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.

Regional Leadership Meetings—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 for more details. The registration deadline is November 9.

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 their own funds for transportation, lodging, per diem, and other expenses. If your state is planning to participate in person, please email sbac@wested.org as soon as possible so we can confirm that the meeting space will accommodate all participants.

Resources

AASCU Report—A new report on college readiness from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities urges higher education institutions to collaborate with K-12 schools at all levels to help prepare students for postsecondary education. Learn more at <http://www.aascu.org/CollegeReadiness/ExecutiveSummary/>.

ELA webinar recording—On October 25, Barb Kapinus of Smarter Balanced and Sue Pimentel and Jennifer Dean of Student Achievement Partners presented an informational webinar about the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for ELA/Literacy to the Consortium. The webinar provided a deeper understanding of the CCSS for ELA/Literacy, with a focus on Smarter Balanced and its development of assessments aligned to the CCSS, and included an overview of the CCSS's implications for assessment, including the criteria for evaluating CCSS-aligned items and passages. A recording of the webinar is available here: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/resources-events/webinars/>.

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 high school students have the option to test earlier than grade 11?

Through the optional interim assessments, teachers will have the ability to administer a comprehensive interim assessment that mirrors the content of the summative assessment, or to select one or more content clusters to assess specific elements of the grade-level Common Core State Standards for students in 9th and 10th grade. In addition, Smarter Balanced will develop an end-of-course test-builder, using the interim item bank, for states that wish to administer high school end-of-course assessments. The design characteristics of the interim assessment for grades 9 and 10 are still being developed and reviewed by member states.

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Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

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