

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 91

Week ending Friday, November 16, 2012

Top News This Week

- **Preview of the draft initial achievement level descriptors**

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. Smarter Balanced is beginning a lengthy external review process for the draft initial achievement level descriptors (ALDs). As I have mentioned before, ALDs describe the knowledge, skills, and processes expected at different levels of performance on the Smarter Balanced assessments. They also help teachers, parents, and policymakers interpret student scores in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. Smarter Balanced is developing an integrated suite of ALDs that serve different purposes for item writing, standard-setting, and reporting results.

The draft initial ALDs are the culmination of the hard work by K-12 teachers and higher education faculty—representing each of our Governing States—who convened in October for a five-day workshop. In addition, prior to the October workshop, we collaborated with many of our K-12 and higher education stakeholders to develop a college content-readiness definition and policy framework with implications for 12th grade and postsecondary coursework at each achievement level on the 11th grade assessment.

Reaching consensus on the ALDs—and what they signal about students' readiness for postsecondary coursework—is essential. A primary goal of Smarter Balanced is that the grade 11 summative assessment can be used as evidence that students are ready for entry-level, transferable credit-bearing courses in English and mathematics and should be exempted from remedial coursework.

That's why I strongly encourage member states, partners, and interested stakeholders to participate in this public review period. Beginning November 27, the draft initial ALDs and supporting materials will be available on the Smarter Balanced website, along with a feedback survey that will remain open through mid-January. Following the review period, the initial ALDs will be revised. Governing States are expected to finalize the initial ALDs in March 2013. It's important to note that the ALDs are labeled "initial" intentionally. The Consortium will revise the

ALDs as needed based on results of the Field Test in early 2014.

I wanted to share another important announcement this week. Congratulations to Chris Minnich, who was named executive director of CCSSO. As senior membership director, Chris played a leading role in the development and adoption of the Common Core State Standards. He has also been an advocate and ally for next-generation assessments. We look forward to continuing our strong partnership with CCSSO. Read the announcement here: <http://bit.ly/RU2MDM>.

Finally, I hope everyone has a safe and happy Thanksgiving. Smarter Balanced will be closed on Friday, November 23; the Weekly Update will resume on November 30. JW

Announcements

Draft initial achievement level descriptors preview—K-12 and Higher Education State Leads and work group members were provided an opportunity to preview the draft Smarter Balanced Initial Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs) during a webinar on Thursday, November 15, 2012. Please see the November 13 email sent from sbac@wested.org for webinar recording details.

Beginning November 27, the draft set of ALD materials will be posted and disseminated for approximately six weeks of public review. Consortium members are encouraged to convene groups of stakeholders (e.g., mathematics and English language arts content specialists and faculty) to jointly comment on the ALDs and provide a consolidated state perspective on the materials. Please watch for emails with additional information on the release and feedback process.

Upcoming Events

Chiefs meeting—The next meeting of the member state Chiefs will occur via webinar on Monday, November 26, at 1:00 p.m. Pacific time.

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. Registration closes Monday, November 19.

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/>.

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.

How can member states and other stakeholders submit feedback on the draft initial ALDs?

Smarter Balanced welcomes feedback on the content, clarity, and rigor of the draft initial ALDs. Beginning on November 27, the ALDs and supporting materials will be available on the Smarter Balanced website. An online survey will allow individual stakeholders and organizations to submit both structured and open-ended feedback. Smarter Balanced encourages member states and partners to solicit feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders, including state boards of education, K-12 teachers and administrators, higher education faculty, and content experts.

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