

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 92

Week ending Friday, November 30, 2012

Top News This Week

- **Release of the draft initial achievement level descriptors and Dec. 17 informational webinar**
- **Technology Strategy Framework & System Requirements Specifications document release**
- **CCSS for mathematics webinars recordings available**
- **Wireless Generation selected for reporting contract**
- **Meeting schedule adjustments for December and January**

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. In the middle of the holiday season, Smarter Balanced is busier than ever. This week we released draft initial achievement level descriptors (ALDs) online for public review and comment. I encourage member states and partners to spread the word far and wide about the availability of the ALDs and the college content-readiness definition and policy framework. The comment period is open through January 15, and all documents are available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/achievement-level-descriptors-and-college-readiness/>.

We also posted the preliminary test blueprints approved by Governing States earlier this month, along with a guide that explains the role of test blueprints and how to interpret the blueprints and target sampling tables. Test blueprints describe the content of the English language arts/literacy and mathematics summative assessments and how that content will be assessed. They also provide information for test developers and other stakeholders about the number of items, score points, and depth of knowledge for items associated with each assessment target. Download the preliminary test blueprints here: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/>.

Next week, Smarter Balanced will release the technology strategy framework and system requirements for the implementation of the Smarter Balanced assessments. This framework provides minimum hardware specifications and basic bandwidth calculations that will allow schools and districts to evaluate which of their existing devices will support the administration of next-generation assessments.

I am pleased that we have been able to craft specifications that will support an innovative assessment system and will allow the majority of schools and districts in member states to

successfully administer the assessments with their existing infrastructure.

Together, the preliminary test blueprints and the minimum technology specifications allow schools and districts to plan for the implementation of the assessment system with more certainty. These are major milestones for the Consortium that would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of our member states, work groups, staff, and partners. Thanks for your ongoing support. JW

Announcements

Draft initial achievement level descriptors released—The draft initial achievement level descriptors (ALDs) are available for feedback and review through January 15, 2013. Developed by K-12 teachers, higher education faculty, and content experts, the initial ALDs describe levels of student performance in English language arts/literacy and mathematics on the Smarter Balanced assessments. Smarter Balanced has also released a college content-readiness definition with associated implications for 12th-grade and postsecondary coursework at each achievement level on the 11th-grade assessment. 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. The draft initial ALDs and an online feedback survey are on the Smarter Balanced website: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/achievement-level-descriptors-and-college-readiness/>.

Smarter Balanced will host a webinar on Monday, December 17, from 12:30 to 2:00 p.m. Pacific to provide an overview of the draft initial ALDs. Please see the November 29 email sent from sbac@wested.org for additional information.

Technology Strategy Framework & System Requirements Specifications document release—On Tuesday, December 4, Smarter Balanced will release the technology strategy framework and system requirements specifications for the implementation of the assessment system in the 2014-15 school year. The framework provides minimum hardware specifications and basic bandwidth calculations that will allow schools and districts to evaluate which of their existing computers will support the administration of the assessment system in the 2014-15 school year. In the coming weeks, the Technology Readiness Tool will be updated with these specifications to allow districts to conduct a gap analysis. K-12 state leads are encouraged to communicate with district leadership, technology staff, and assessment coordinators about the framework and their state's plan for technology readiness. A template email that can be distributed to school districts with a link to the resources online and background information was distributed to K-12 state leads on November 30 from sbac@wested.org.

Mathematics webinars recordings available—On September 7 and November 15, Student Achievement Partners' Jason Zimba and Smarter Balanced Director of Mathematics Shelbi Cole presented informational webinars about the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (CCSSM) to the Consortium. The September 7 webinar provided a deeper understanding of the standards with a focus on Smarter Balanced and its development of assessments aligned to the CCSSM, and provided an overview of the CCSSM's implications for assessment, including criteria for evaluating CCSS-aligned items and tasks. The November 15 webinar focused on identifying three shifts called for by the standards in assessment items through analysis of examples and non-examples. The webinar recordings are available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/resources-events/webinars/>.

Wireless Generation selected for reporting contract—Smarter Balanced selected Wireless Generation to develop the Consortium’s reporting system. The system will be an online, open-source solution for reporting student results from its assessments, providing teachers, administrators, parents, and students with actionable information about student progress toward college and career readiness. Additional information is available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/news/smarter-balanced-awards-reporting-system-contract-to-wireless-generation/>.

Meeting schedule adjustments for December and January—The regular meeting schedule of the Executive Committee, Governing States, and All States will be adjusted during the holidays and into the month of January. There will be no meetings on December 25 and January 1, and all meetings in the month of January will be adjusted by one week. The Executive Committee will meet on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays, All States will meet on the 3rd and 5th Tuesdays, and Governing States will meet on the 5th Tuesday. Please refer to the attached document for a complete listing of the adjusted schedule. The schedule is also posted on the Collaboration Site homepage under Recent & Upcoming Events: <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home>.

Upcoming Events

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

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.

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 did Smarter Balanced determine the minimum technology specifications?

The Technology Approach Work Group collaborated with member states, as well as Navigation North, American Institutes for Research, Measured Progress, and Pearson to analyze the memory and processor load that the test delivery engine will require; the bandwidth necessary to transmit stimulus materials and items to students; and the data submitted by Smarter Balanced schools and districts through the Technology Readiness Tool. These analyses identified the minimum technology necessary to assess the full depth and breadth of the Common Core State Standards in a next-generation assessment.

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Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

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