

## Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

### Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 93

Week ending Friday, December 7, 2012

#### Top News This Week

- Preliminary Test Blueprints released
- Technology Strategy Framework & System Requirements Specifications document release
- Network Bandwidth Checker available to help schools prepare
- Draft ALDs feedback period open through January 15
- Webinar to review draft ALDs to be hosted on December 17
- Smarter Balanced holidays for 2013 and 2014

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. The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium has reached key milestones this year toward creating the next generation of assessments for the school year 2014-15:

- Released a set of sample assessment items and performance tasks developed in collaboration with educators and content experts designed to create a better understanding among teachers, administrators, and policymakers of the Common Core State Standards and help prepare them for implementation of the Smarter Balanced assessments.
- Released and posted on the Smarter Balanced website the draft initial achievement level descriptors (ALDs) for public review and feedback through January 15, 2013. The initial draft ALDs describe levels of student performance in English language arts/literacy and mathematics on Smarter Balanced assessments.
- Released a college content-readiness definition with associated implications for 12th grade and postsecondary coursework at each level of achievement on the 11th-grade assessment. Feedback can be submitted via an online survey.
- The Governing States of the Consortium adopted the preliminary test blueprints for the summative assessments of mathematics and English language arts/literacy for grades 3–8 and high school.
- Released the technology strategy framework and system requirements specifications for minimum hardware specifications and basic bandwidth calculations that will allow schools and districts to evaluate which of their existing devices will support the next generation of assessments.

Achieving these milestones represents significant progress toward keeping Smarter Balanced on track and on time for rolling out the new assessment system in the school year 2014-15. JW

## **Announcements**

Preliminary Test Blueprints released—On November 20, the Smarter Balanced Governing States approved the preliminary test blueprints describing the content of the English language arts/literacy and mathematics summative assessments for grades 3–8 and high school—and how that content will be assessed. Developed with broad input from member states, partners, and stakeholders, the preliminary test blueprints reflect the depth and breadth of the performance expectations of the Common Core State Standards.

The test blueprints include critical information about the number of items, score points, and depth of knowledge for items associated with each assessment target. They will guide the development of items and performance tasks, the Pilot and Field Tests, score reporting, standard setting, and ongoing research. These blueprints are “preliminary” because they establish assessment design features that may be subject to refinement and revision after the analysis of the Pilot and Field Tests. The full document can be accessed at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/>.

Technology Strategy Framework & System Requirements Specifications released—On December 4, Smarter Balanced released a technology planning framework for member states preparing to implement the assessment system in the 2014-15 school year. The framework, developed by Navigation North on behalf of the Consortium, 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. The framework was developed with input and feedback from Smarter Balanced member states, work groups, and data from the Technology Readiness Tool. Based on the research and data analysis, Smarter Balanced estimates that the majority of schools and districts in member states will be able to successfully administer the assessments with their existing infrastructure. The full Smarter Balanced Technology Strategy Framework and Systems Requirements Specifications report can be accessed at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/technology/>.

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](mailto:sbac@wested.org).

Network Bandwidth Checker available to help schools prepare—Smarter Balanced has launched an online tool to help schools check the bandwidth of their network in preparation for the assessment. The bandwidth checker is compatible with Mozilla Firefox on computers with Windows, OS X, or Linux operating systems; Safari on tablets using the iOS operating system; and Chrome on tablets using the Android operating system. The bandwidth checker cannot be accessed using Internet Explorer. The tool and instructions can be accessed here: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/technology/>.

Draft ALDs feedback period open through January 15—The draft initial achievement level descriptors (ALDs) were released on November 27 and 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 at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/achievement-level-descriptors-and-college-readiness/>.

Webinar to review draft ALDs to be hosted on December 17—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](mailto:sbac@wested.org) for additional information.

Smarter Balanced holidays for 2013 and 2014—Please refer to the attached document for a complete listing of the holidays observed by Smarter Balanced in 2013 and 2014.

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. The schedule is posted on the Collaboration Site homepage under Recent & Upcoming Events at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home>.

## **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.

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 the blueprints for the summative assessments of mathematics and English language arts/literacy for grades 3–8 and high school referred to as “preliminary”?*

These blueprints are referred to as “preliminary” because they establish assessment design features that may be subject to refinement and revision after the analysis of Pilot and Field testing. Final blueprints for the Smarter Balanced summative assessments will be adopted by Governing States prior to full implementation in the 2014-15 school year.

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