

## **Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**

### **Smarter Balanced Weekly Update**

*Issue 94*

*Week ending Friday, December 14, 2012*

#### **Top News This Week**

- Reminder: Webinar to review draft ALDs to be hosted on December 17
- CCSSO webinar on mathematics sample items

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 has been busier than ever. This week we concluded our hosting of three Regional Leadership Meetings: Midwest states met in St Louis on December 3; eastern states met in Washington, DC, December 7; and the western states met in Las Vegas on December 11. State teams were composed of Chiefs and SHEEOs or their delegates as well as governors' education policy advisors.

The regional meetings were held to strategically address opportunities and challenges facing Smarter Balanced states as they transition to the Common Core State Standards and the Smarter Balanced system of assessments. Topics discussed in the regional meetings were:

- Reaching consensus on college and career readiness;
- Preparing for lower rates of proficiency on the spring 2015 summative tests;
- Discussing models open to the Consortium as it transitions from its current assessment development phase to providing sustainable operational support to member states;
- Considering the viability of the regional model for collaborative implementation.

Participants uniformly appreciated the opportunity to interact in a small group setting and consider opportunities for regional collaboration and problem solving. Smarter Balanced will be putting together a plan to continue to support regional meetings and collaborations in the future.

Also this week we met with our Technical Advisory Committee on the 12th and 13th in Las Vegas. The session held on day one covered our validity framework and research plan; achievement level descriptors; and assessment implications of career readiness.

Day two topics included cross-consortia comparability; initial design options for standard setting; a review of our preliminary test blueprints; an update on Pilot Test sampling and research plans; interim assessment design; and an overview of developments and plans for the formative assessment component of the Smarter Balanced Assessment System.

I would like to thank our presenters: Steve Sireci, Jaci King, Karla Egan, Luz Bay, Marty McCall, Richard Schwarz, and Lynette Russell. I would also like to thank the members of the Smarter Balanced family who helped coordinate these two well-planned events. Thanks for your ongoing support. JW

## **Announcements**

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.

CCSSO webinar on mathematics sample items—CCSSO will host a webinar on December 19 at 1:30 p.m. Pacific about the recently released Smarter Balanced and PARCC sample assessment items in mathematics with middle school mathematics teacher Jim Mamer. Mamer received the 2012 Ohio Council of Teachers of Mathematics Elementary Mathematics Teaching Award, is an active leader in the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), and is currently implementing the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics with his students. To register for this webinar, please visit <https://ccsso.webex.com/ccsso/onstage/g.php?t=a&d=717050075>. This webinar complements a November 2012 webinar on the ELA sample assessment items with 2012 National Teacher of the Year and 7th grade ELA teacher Rebecca Mieliwocki. A recording of the ELA webinar and accompanying slides are available here: [http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Digital\\_Resources/CCSSO\\_Webinar\\_What\\_Teachers\\_Can\\_Learn\\_from\\_the\\_New\\_PARCC\\_and\\_Smarter\\_Balanced\\_Sample\\_Assessment\\_Items.html](http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Digital_Resources/CCSSO_Webinar_What_Teachers_Can_Learn_from_the_New_PARCC_and_Smarter_Balanced_Sample_Assessment_Items.html)

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/](#).

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

### **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).

*Does a shared assessment system require a shared or common curriculum?*

No. We believe that curriculum decisions are best made by educators at the local and state levels. States participating in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium will have access to professional development materials and instructional resources for teachers through a digital library. These tools are optional and can be used, as needed, to complement state curriculum supports to districts and teachers.

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**Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**

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