

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 95

Week ending Friday, December 21, 2012

Top News This Week

- Charlie Lenth re-elected to Executive Committee
- Next Collaboration Conference announced
- ALD webinar recording available next week
- Sustainability plan meeting for state leads on January 8
- Reporting System design update

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.

The next Weekly Update will be sent on January 4, 2013.

From the Executive Director

Greetings. As we wind down the year, and as I send this to you in late December, I am drawn not to talk about upcoming activities in Smarter Balanced nor recent Consortium accomplishments. Rather, I feel the need to venture into personal thoughts and beliefs that seem suitable to the season and the times.

I think many of you are familiar with a feature on NPR's *Morning Edition* called "This I Believe" where individuals are invited to share a core belief that seems to center and organize their life. Here's mine.

I believe that schools are an incredible inter-generational gift that adults provide to the young. I don't know how else to explain what I think schools mean both to those of us who are "grown-ups" and to our children and young adults. Think of it: In schools, we have created these places across our society where our young are gathered together, where they are tended to and cared for by dedicated adults, where they are taught not only valuable knowledge and skills but also important social and personal lessons, and—perhaps foremost for some—where they are made to feel there is a safe, nurturing, and dependable place for them. Granted, this does not always work. There are some buildings that are under-resourced and in poor condition; there are some classrooms where instruction needs to be much improved; there are some children who experience school as unsafe and barely tolerable. Nonetheless, this is not the norm, it is not what we expect or strive for, and those of us dedicated to quality education are relentless in our drive to improve schools and schooling. Recently we have seen the effects of a terrible storm and are still reeling from a tragedy that's beyond comprehension. In the face of these overwhelming events, however, those of us fortunate enough to be a part of the wonderful gift that's embodied in schools must not lose sight of the fact that every day (every school day, anyway) millions upon millions of children and young adults come to us and we take care of them. That is a gift beyond measure. JW

Announcements

Charlie Lenth re-elected to Executive Committee—Dr. Charles Lenth, Vice President for Policy Analysis and Academic Affairs at the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), was re-elected by the higher education state leads to serve on the Consortium's Executive Committee. The term of the position Charlie fills runs through the rest of the grant period, ending September 30, 2014. Charlie has been one of two higher education representatives on the nine-member governing body since January 2011.

Collaboration Conference announced—Smarter Balanced is pleased to announce that the date and location have been set for the next Collaboration Conference and Chiefs meeting, March 18–22, 2013, in Arlington, VA. Invited participants have received a Save the Date email from sbac@wested.org. An email with instructions on registration will be sent to invitees in early January.

ALDs webinar recording available next week—On December 17, Smarter Balanced presented an informational webinar about the draft initial achievement level descriptors (ALDs) which included information on submitting feedback. A recording of the webinar will be posted on the public website next week.

The ALD documents and feedback survey are available on the Smarter Balanced public website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/achievement-level-descriptors-and-college-readiness/>. Please remember that feedback must be submitted by January 15. Comments received after the January 15 deadline may be taken into consideration for subsequent drafts.

Sustainability plan meeting—State Leads: On January 8th, there will be a 90-minute discussion with state leads and Executive Committee members on the first phase of work around the Smarter Balanced sustainability plan. The objectives will be to get feedback from states on three key topics: 1) Smarter Balanced's mission/vision statements, 2) scope of services (e.g., what is the core set of services Smarter Balanced will offer versus those that are incremental), and 3) type of future state legal entity we should explore further. The discussion will inform how the team proceeds on building out the overall operating and financial model (e.g., organizational capabilities, budget). Please see the December 20 email sent from sbac@wested.org for more details.

Reporting System update available—An update on the design of the Reporting System is available from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Reporting Work Group and Wireless Generation (Reporting Development contractor for Smarter Balanced). The update serves as a brief introduction to the key concepts and methodology being used to drive the development of stakeholder-focused reporting of assessment results. In addition, the document provides preliminary findings about some of the reporting system's primary user groups and their priorities, as well as a sample user story for each.

The process of report design is based largely around input from all user groups, and the public's feedback is welcomed and appreciated. An online survey will be made available on January 7, 2013, to gather further input from stakeholders about user purposes for reports. An announcement involving survey instructions will be made once the survey is posted.

The Reporting System update is located on the Smarter Balanced website at: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Reporting-Progress-Update-Dec-2012.pdf>.

Updated December and January meeting schedule—The updated December and January meeting schedule is posted on the Collaboration Site homepage under Recent & Upcoming Events: <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home>.

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>.

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