

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 96

Week ending Friday, January 4, 2013

Top News This Week

- RFP posted for Field Test Item & Task Writing and Pilot & Field Test Scoring
- Executive Committee Co-chair election process will begin week of January 7
- ALD webinar recording available for public viewing
- Reminder: ALD feedback due by January 15

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, and Happy New Year. Being a numbers kind of guy, I find it interesting that 2013 is the first time since 1987 that we haven't had a year with at least two identical digits—a 26-year run. And you thought I didn't know how to amuse myself.

Well, I am also amusing myself with thoughts of what the Smarter Balanced new year will be bringing us. For today, I'll limit myself to major milestones that are upcoming for January and February of 2013. In just a couple of weeks, on January 15, the comment period for a first round of feedback on our initial achievement level descriptors (ALDs) closes. If you haven't had a chance, I encourage you to look these over and tell us what you think. The ALDs are an important part of our work, and are our description of how we intend to interpret the meaning of scores on our assessments. The draft ALDs and the opportunity for feedback can be found at:

<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/achievement-level-descriptors-and-college-readiness/>.

Also in the middle of January, we should be getting back updated results from our technology readiness survey. This survey of the technology in schools across the Consortium is being enhanced to incorporate into the reporting a gap analysis using the minimum technology standards needed for the Smarter Balanced assessments. That enhancement is still being developed, so a specific release date is not yet available. We are looking forward to being able to help our states and their schools get a clearer picture of where they stand with regard to technology readiness. You can learn more about our technology requirements and the Technology Readiness Tool here: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/technology/>.

We have exciting developments occurring on the contracting front: Before the end of this month, we will issue our contract for work on our Formative Tools and Processes efforts. This is very exciting for us, and we look forward to getting that work rolling. If you want to get a sense of the scope of what this effort

entails, you can take a look at our formative work plan at: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Formative-Assessment-Master-Work-Plan-Narrative.pdf>.

Additionally, in early February we will receive bids on our largest contract offering to date—about \$55 million for writing of items and tasks for the 2014 Field Test and scoring of items and tasks for the 2013 Pilot and the 2014 Field Test. You can find the Request for Proposals for those services under “SBAC RFP No. 16/17” on our contracts site at: <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Jobs-Contracts.aspx>.

Finally, our Pilot Test kicks off on February 20. This activity, engaging all 21 of our Governing States, will involve about one million students across the Consortium. Those students will take short forms of Smarter Balanced items and tasks in either English language arts or mathematics. The test forms have been carefully assembled and the schools have been scientifically selected to allow us to conduct a refined analysis of the 5,000 or so items and tasks that comprise the Pilot pool. The Pilot Test is a “test of the test,” not a test of students. Its purpose is to pressure test the items and tasks to see if they stand up to the quality standards we expect for the Smarter Balanced assessments. To learn more about the Pilot Test, look in next week’s Weekly Update, when we will post a link to the (under-development) Pilot Test page on our website. JW

Announcements

The RFP for Field Test Item & Task Writing and Pilot & Field Test Scoring (RFP-16/17) has been released to vendors—The Consortium has released the RFP to procure a contractor to develop and score all items and tasks for the Field Test; complete all studies and documentation for peer review of the item development and scoring for the Field Test event; score of Pilot Test items and tasks; and complete the data review of Pilot and Field Test items and revise items as necessary for inclusion in the item pool. Proposal responses are due February 8. The RFP is available at <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Jobs-Contracts.aspx>.

Executive Committee Co-chair election process will begin week of January 7—The process to elect a new EC co-chair will begin next week. The new co-chair will fill the remainder of the term currently held by Carissa Miller and will run through September 30, 2013. Carissa will be leaving the Idaho state education agency in February, and, per the Consortium’s governance process, all Governing States will be provided the opportunity to nominate individuals to fill her position.

ALD webinar recording available—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 is posted here: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/resources-events/webinars/>.

Reminder: ALD feedback due by January 15—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. 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/>.

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.

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 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

Quarterly Program Report available—The quarterly project report for the period ending September 31, 2012, can be found at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/resources-events/publications-resources/>. The report details the Consortium's progress in key areas and priorities for the next three months.

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.

Whom do I contact if I have questions about recruitment for the Smarter Balance Pilot Test?

Please contact the recruitment contractor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC)
Phone: 800-847-3193
Email: SmarterBalancedRecruitment@DataRecognitionCorp.com

Whom do I contact if I have general questions about the Pilot or specific questions related to uploading students and navigating the online delivery system?

Please contact the AIR Help Desk
Phone: 866-815-7246
Email: SmarterBalancedHelpDesk@air.org

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