

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 105

Week ending Friday, March 8, 2013

Top News This Week

- Revised ALDs and college content-readiness policy released to states

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. We have had over two weeks of Pilot testing and by all accounts we are accomplishing our goals, including valuable lessons that we can use for Field testing. I want to express my profound thanks to our Governing State Chiefs and K-12 leads, public information officers, principals, teachers, and parents for working closely with the Consortium staff and contractors to make our Pilot Test a success. Here are the numbers as of Friday, March 8, at 1:45 p.m. Pacific time:

- **988,473**: Number of students recruited.
- **5,217**: Number of schools recruited across the Consortium.
- **21**: Number of member states participating (all of our Governing States).
- **41,605**: Number of students who have completed their tests in grades 7, 8, and 9.

I am looking forward to seeing you during our third Smarter Balanced Collaboration Conference on March 19–22 at the Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel in Arlington, Virginia. Consistent with the mission of Smarter Balanced, the Collaboration Conference will bring together stakeholders from across our member states to address important issues that face the Consortium. Governing State Chiefs will discuss and vote on critical policy decisions, work group co-chairs will collaborate on work underway, and state leads will meet face-to-face to guide the direction of Smarter Balanced on important near-term and long-term issues. Members of the media and the public are invited to attend the public session of the conference, on Wednesday, March 20, from 1:15 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., to witness the voting by Governing State Chiefs.

This week the Consortium kicked off its work on the Formative Assessment and Digital Library at the Wireless Generation headquarters in Brooklyn, NY. Consortium members and Executive staff traveled to New York and worked hard to make the meeting the success that it was. I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank them and recognize their contributions. Meeting participant names follow. JW

- Cindy Sharp (NV)
- Colleen Anderson (IA)
- Deb Matthews (KS)
- Gay Pickner (SD)
- Jessica Vavrus (WA)
- Julie Joslin (NC)
- Kim Young (MI)

- Judy Snow (MT)
- Mark Freed (OR)
- Kristen Maxwell (WA)
- Lynette Russell (WI)
- Monica Mann (HI)
- Patti Reiss (HI)
- Barb Kapinus (SBAC)
- Chrys Mursky (SBAC)
- Joe Willhoft (SBAC)
- Ruth McKenna (SBAC)
- Shelbi Cole (SBAC)
- Tony Alpert (SBAC)

Announcements

Revised ALDs and college content-readiness policy released to states—Governing State Leads: The Smarter Balanced initial achievement level descriptors (ALDs) and college content-readiness policy have been finalized and are now posted for your review in preparation for the Governing States vote during the upcoming Collaboration Conference. The materials are available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/achievement-level-descriptors-and-college-readiness/>. Note that the college content-readiness policy is included in the introduction to both the ELA/literacy and mathematics ALDs documents.

A recording of the March 5 webinar providing a final walk-through of the ALDs and college content-readiness policy is posted on the Collaboration Site along with the slide presentation at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/webinars>.

CAT algorithm webinar on 3/15—K-12 state leads and work group members: Please mark your calendars for a computer adaptive testing (CAT) algorithm webinar, scheduled for Friday, March 15, from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. Pacific time. The purpose of the webinar is to orient state leads and work group members to the work underway and considerations in determining the CAT algorithm. The CAT algorithm is the logic used for item selection during the summative test event. As such, the CAT algorithm drives content coverage, test precision, and test length. This webinar will provide a high-level description of how the CAT algorithm addresses each of these critically important facets of the summative assessment. Work group members are welcome to attend. Please see the February 26 email sent from sbac@wested.org for details.

Sustainability meeting on 3/13—State leads: the Sustainability Task Force has been working in conjunction with the Executive Staff and McKinsey & Company to compile and recommend an overall Sustainability Plan. Governing States will vote on the plan at the Smarter Balanced Collaboration Conference on March 20. In advance of that meeting, the set of recommendations will be reviewed with the K-12 and Higher Education Leads on Wednesday, March 13, from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. Pacific time (3:00 to 5:00 p.m. eastern time). The objectives of the discussion will be to review the overall plan that the Task Force has compiled, and seek input on how to best set up and prepare for a successful endorsement of the plan on March 20. Please see the February 15 email sent from sbac@wested.org for details.

Upcoming Events

Collaboration Conference March 19-22—Smarter Balanced is hosting its semiannual Collaboration Conference and Chiefs meeting, March 19–22, 2013, in Arlington, VA (near Reagan National Airport). Invited participants have received an email invitation from sbac@wested.org with instructions on registration for the conference. Events during this collaboration meeting are role-specific, so please be certain of the session days you are signing up to attend. Please refer to the email invitation sent from sbac@wested.org on January 25. If you have any questions regarding your attendance on a particular day, please check with the Project Management Partner (WestEd) at sbac@wested.org.

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.

What is a performance task?

Performance tasks challenge students to apply their knowledge and skills to respond to real-world problems. They can best be described as collections of questions and activities that are coherently connected to a single theme or scenario. These activities are meant to measure capacities such as depth of understanding, research skills, and complex analysis, which cannot be adequately assessed with selected- or constructed-response items.

Performance tasks in reading, writing, and mathematics will be part of the Smarter Balanced summative year-end assessment. Performance tasks can also be administered as part of the optional interim assessments throughout the year. The performance tasks will be delivered by computer (but will not be computer adaptive), and they will take one to two class periods to complete.

--

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd—Project Management Partner
sbac@wested.org