

## Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

### Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 106

Week ending Friday, March 15, 2013

#### Top News This Week

- Standards Digest from Student Achievement Partners available
- CAT algorithm webinar recording available

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. In 2011 the Educational Testing Service created the Gordon Commission on the Future of Assessment in Education with a two-year tenure "to consider the nature and content of American education during the 21st century and how assessment can be used most effectively to advance that vision by serving the educational and informational needs of students, teachers and society." This week the Gordon Commission on the Future of Assessment in Education, chaired by Yale's Edmund Gordon, issued A Statement Concerning Public Policy, which can be found at [http://www.gordoncommission.org/rsc/pdfs/gordon\\_commission\\_public\\_policy\\_report.pdf](http://www.gordoncommission.org/rsc/pdfs/gordon_commission_public_policy_report.pdf).

According to the Commission's report, "[t]he goal in issuing the public policy statement is to stimulate a productive national conversation about the assessment and its relationship to teaching and learning at a time when developments in assessment and education in the United States presents a remarkable opportunity to reconceptualize the purposes of educational purposes."

The Commission's report provides recommendations to further research and development of the Smarter Balanced and PARCC assessments beyond 2014–15. While the report is not critical of the work of the assessment consortia, it does include this passage:

"The progress made by the PARCC and Smarter Balanced consortia in assessment development, while significant, will be far from what is ultimately needed for either accountability or classroom instructional improvement purposes. This is not a criticism of the Consortia per se, but a realistic appraisal of the design constraints and timelines imposed upon their work from the outset."

Along a similar vein, Secretary Arne Duncan's Chief of Staff, Joanne Weiss, was quoted in Education Week as saying the report, "shines a needed spotlight on the future of assessment, pushing us to the next stages of this vital work coherent, coordinated, and sustainable."

Those of you who have been following our work in Smarter Balanced know full well that we agree with both Weiss and the Commission's report. Namely, we have always viewed our work as taking an important and innovative step forward for assessment, but we also recognize that this will be Version 1.0 of Smarter Balanced, with future improvements and developments ahead.

Next Tuesday through Friday members from across the Consortium come together for our semi-annual Collaboration Conference. In next week's Update, my comments will report on the significant events and decisions that occur at our meeting in Arlington, Virginia. JW

## **Announcements**

Standards Digest from Student Achievement Partners—K–12 state leads: In response to a request from Higher Education Leads, Student Achievement Partners have created a digest of the Common Core State Standards for higher education. This document is meant to be a quick and accessible introduction to the standards for faculty and other interested higher education audiences, and K–12 state leads may find it useful. It is posted on the Collaboration Site here:

<https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/document-library>

CAT algorithm webinar recording—On March 15, Smarter Balanced presented an information webinar 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 provided a high-level description of how the CAT algorithm addresses each of these critically important facets of the summative assessment. A recording of the webinar is available here:

<https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/webinars>.

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>.

## **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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:sbac@wested.org).

## **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).

*Will all schools that volunteer be able to participate in testing?*

Yes, however, schools that volunteer will be taking a different version of the assessment in the same online format as the scientific population. Volunteer administrations will start in April.

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**Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**

WestEd—Project Management Partner

[sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org)

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