

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 107

Week ending Friday, March 22, 2013

Top News This Week

- U.S. Virgin Islands approved as Affiliate member
- Governing States elect Luci Willits to Executive Committee
- Governing States and All States meeting schedule changes
- RFP for Test Administration for the Field Test released to vendors

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. The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium convened its third Collaboration Conference this week at the Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel in Arlington, VA, bringing together the Consortium's 24 member states—including chief state school officers, state K-12 and Higher Education Leads, work group members, and contractors—to discuss the Consortium's progress and make policy decisions on the design and implementation of the next-generation assessment system aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

It was the most successful conference to date, including a record number of more than 100 attending the Wednesday public meeting of the Consortium's 21 Governing States. At that meeting, 12 of our 21 Governing State Chiefs were joined by nine designees to consider several policy items before the Consortium. Also in attendance were several guests from USDOE, CCSSO, and foundations.

During the public session, the Chiefs and designees voted to move forward on key policy decisions to ensure the assessments reflect the depth and rigor of the Common Core State Standards. First, the Consortium approved a motion endorsing the scope of services that will be available to states beginning in the 2014-15 school year, including both the summative, accountability assessments for grades 3-8 and 11 and a suite of additional assessment options states may choose to subscribe to.

The Chiefs also approved moving forward to establish an affiliate relationship with the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) at the University of California, Los Angeles. This approval authorized me to initiate negotiations with CRESST on behalf of Smarter Balanced and to draft an organizational plan and revised set of bylaws to take effect after the conclusion of the federal grant in 2014. Drs. Eva Baker and Li Cai, co-directors of CRESST, attended our meeting and expressed their excitement over the opportunities that this affiliation brings to both CRESST and Smarter Balanced.

Executive Committee Co-Chair Joseph Martineau commended the Governing States for being on "the right track for the implementation of the next-generation assessments." He also acknowledged CRESST as a "premier educational assessment and research center" and said that their affiliation "maintains and strengthens the work of our state-led consortium well into the future."

The state Chiefs also approved the initial achievement level descriptors (ALDs). The initial ALDs are

based upon four levels of achievement that describe student performance on our rigorous new assessments in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. Smarter Balanced is developing an integrated suite of ALDs that serve different purposes for item writing, standard setting, and reporting results. Reporting ALDs—which will provide guidance to students and parents about how to interpret performance on the assessments—will be developed following standard setting in 2014. The complete English language arts/literacy and mathematics initial ALDs are available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/achievement-level-descriptors-and-college-readiness/>.

I also want to welcome a new Executive Committee member. The Governing States elected Luci Willits, Chief of Staff for the Idaho State Department of Education, to the at-large Executive Committee seat that became available when Deb Sigman (CA) left that position after recently being elected to the position of Co-Chair. Congratulations, Luci! JW

Announcements

U.S. Virgin Islands approved as Affiliate member—The Consortium is pleased to announce that the Executive Committee has approved the U.S. Virgin Islands as the first Smarter Balanced Affiliate member. Affiliate members can participate in Consortium activities and contribute to policy, logistical, and implementation discussions involving the development of the assessment system, including participation in Smarter Balanced work groups. A full press release has been posted on the Smarter Balanced website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/news/u-s-virgin-islands-joins-smarter-balanced-assessment-consortium/>. We extend a warm welcome and look forward to their collaboration as we continue the development of the assessment system.

Governing States elect Luci Willits to Executive Committee—The Governing States have elected Luci Willits, state representative from Idaho, to the Smarter Balanced Executive Committee. Luci has served as the Chief of Staff for the Idaho Department of Education for the past six years and is responsible for the internal operations of the agency. She advises the Superintendent on educational policy, specifically relating to the Common Core State Standards, accountability, teacher compensation, graduation and federal requirements, and labor relations. She also speaks on behalf of the Superintendent before the Idaho Legislature, media, parents, and civic and education groups, and is the Superintendent's deputy and federal liaison representative for the CCSSO. Prior to working for the Department, she developed strategic communications for the Idaho State Board of Education, much around Idaho's ISAT (Idaho Standards Achievement Tests) and accountability plan, and served as Rep. Mike Simpson's congressional press secretary for five years. Luci will fill the position recently vacated by Deb Sigman, who was elected as Executive Committee Co-Chair. The term runs through September 30, 2014.

Governing States and All States meeting schedule changes—As announced during the Collaboration Conference this week, starting next Tuesday, March 26, the Consortium will adjust its regular meeting schedule. The new schedule increases the number of Governing States meetings and replaces the biweekly All States meeting with a monthly All State Partners meeting that includes any Consortium members engaged at the state level (e.g., state leads, work group members, Chiefs). Please note these times are one hour later than previously announced.

Governing States meetings:

- 2nd Tuesday (first meeting on April 9), 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Pacific time
- 4th Tuesday (first meeting on March 26), 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Pacific time

All State Partners meetings:

- 4th Tuesday (first meeting on March 26), 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Pacific time

RFP for Test Administration for the Field Test released to vendors—On behalf of the Consortium, the State of Washington has released an RFP for Field Test administration and help desk services, with proposals due by April 26, 2013. For more details on the scope of services included, please view the RFP

at <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Jobs-Contracts.aspx>.

Resources

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 informational webinar to orient state leads and work group members to the work underway and considerations in determining the computer adaptive testing (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>.

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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Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

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