

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 108

Week ending Friday, March 29, 2013

Top News This Week

- Governing States and All State Partners meeting schedule changes
- Search for new Consortium staff member: Director, State Services
- Collaboration Conference reimbursement information

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. I want to bring you up to date with a recent development with our Pilot testing plans. Our original Pilot Test plans included two opportunities for schools to participate. First, some schools would be randomly selected to be a part of a "research sample," which would generate student responses that we would use for statistical analysis. Second, we made available the opportunity for schools not in the research sample to be a part of a "volunteer sample," where they could voluntarily participate later in the spring. As we started filling out the research sample, we found we needed to ask some schools from our volunteer sample to serve as replacement schools for locations unable to participate in the scientific sample. OK—that was the plan.

As we moved toward making a "volunteer form" of the Pilot available for the voluntary sample, a significant wrinkle emerged. We began to notice an expectation that the testing experience for students taking the voluntary test should be similar to what students will see when they take the operational test in 2014-15. This expectation, while perfectly reasonable, was not the original plan—we had originally planned on simply using one or two of the "modules" that comprise forms used in the Pilot. (In the pilot, the individual modules don't adhere to an overall blueprint the same way a total test does.) In order to respond to the need expressed from the field, we decided to change our plan. We will now release a full set of "Practice Tests" that are built to adhere to Smarter Balanced test blueprints. To do this well, we need to draw items and tasks from across the modules now being used in the scientific sample. As a result, the new Practice Tests won't be available until May 29, two work days after the end of the Pilot testing.

I know May 29 is close to the end of the year for some, and actually after the end of the year for several schools and districts. To mitigate that shortcoming, we have decided to make the Practice Test open and available from our website throughout the summer and into next school year. Also, access to the Practice Tests will not require a password or special ticketing, making it accessible to all who are interested. We recognize this is a change in plans from what we had earlier described, but feel we will actually be doing a better job of providing teachers, schools, parents, and others a better and more comprehensive look at what the Smarter Balanced assessments will entail.

The Practice Tests will:

- Be available for grades 3–8 and 11 in both English language arts and mathematics;

- Follow the planned Smarter Balanced test blueprints, making the Practice Test experience very similar to the assessment experience in 2014-15;
- Afford teachers, administrators, and parents access to items planned and designed for the Smarter Balanced assessment;
- Allow students to access the tests over the summer, with the Practice Test available right up to rollout of the operational assessment;
- Use the full array of item types including performance tasks; and
- Make available versions that demonstrate several accommodations:
 - Text-to-speech,
 - Item-level pop-up Spanish glossaries for construct irrelevant terms (math tests only),
 - Braille, and
 - American Sign Language (ASL).

NOTE: Accommodated forms will be released in phases across the listed grade/content combinations:

- Phase 1, May 29: All accommodations for non–performance task items (with the exception of ASL) in grades 3, 7, and 11 math; and grades 4, 7, and 11 ELA
- Phase 2 (TBD): All accommodations for non–performance task items (with the exception of ASL) in grades 4, 5, 6, and 8 math; and grades 3, 5, 6, and 8 ELA
- Phase 3 (TBD): ASL accommodation in all grades and content areas

We have already shared this same information with our state leads, and our contractors have been communicating with schools and districts that are impacted by this. If you have questions, a good place to start is with your district assessment coordinator or with your state's assessment office.

We don't like to make changes like this, but we do think that we are being more responsive to the needs that were being expressed, and also think we will actually be providing a better product than was being originally planned. JW

Announcements

Governing States and All State Partners meeting schedule changes—As a reminder, the schedules for these key Consortium meetings have been adjusted to provide for increased communication with our member states. Governing States meetings now occur biweekly on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month and the All State Partners meeting, which replaced the All States meeting, takes place monthly on the 4th Tuesday. The All State Partners meeting is open to any Consortium members engaged at the state level (e.g., state leads, work group members, Chiefs).

Governing States meetings:

- 2nd Tuesday, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Pacific
- 4th Tuesday, 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Pacific

All State Partners meetings:

- 4th Tuesday, 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Pacific

Search for new Consortium staff member: Director, State Services—The Consortium is soliciting candidates for the Director, State Services position. A primary responsibility of this position is to serve as a primary point of contact for K-12 state leads and to support their efforts to effectively implement the Smarter Balanced Assessment System in our member states. Please reference the OSPI website for

more information on the position. <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Jobs-Contracts.aspx>.

Collaboration Conference reimbursement information—Conference participants: Detailed instructions on requesting travel expense reimbursement were distributed earlier this week. Please submit all reimbursement requests to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) as soon as possible and no later than June 30, 2013. Refer to the email from sbac@wested.org for further instructions and contact Karrie Guss with any questions at karrie.guss@k12.wa.us or 360.725.6068.

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.

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 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>.

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

iPad Testing with Mechanical Keyboard—I would like to know if the mechanical keyboard is a must, and if so what are you recommending for iPad usage? Also, is there a future plan to configure your software in a manner where iPads can be used standalone with the on-screen keyboard instead of a mechanical one?

The Technology Approach and Reporting Work Group is currently working update to the Technology Strategy Framework document related to keyboards. The work group is close to having a definitive response, but not there yet. The external keyboard requirement as stated in the Technology Strategy Framework document is accurate. Smarter Balanced will be sure to respond as necessary if the final update results in any changes to the current specifications for keyboards.

Please keep in mind that the concern with the use of embedded keyboards on touch-screen devices is the amount of "real estate" those keyboards use up, resulting in less screen space available for items and response areas. This can be a problem when items need to allocate space to include, for example, a reading passage or passages, the test question area, and the response area.

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Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd - Project Management Partner

sbac@wested.org