

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 109

Week ending Friday, April 5, 2013

Top News This Week

- Professional Development Efforts Launched to Solicit Appointments for State-Specific Team Leaders
- Consortium Contacts Roster and State Lead Webpage Launched

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 am delighted to report that our Smarter Balanced Pilot Test is on track and providing information critical to the development of a Smarter Balanced assessment next-generation system for school year 2014-15. This week's Pilot Test counts are: 217,390 tests started and 168,841 tests completed. With more than one million students signed up to participate, the Smarter Balanced Pilot Test represents one of the largest pilots of an assessment system in the United States.

A recent article from the Center for Digital Education (a national research and advisory institute specializing in K-12 and higher education technology trends, policy, and funding) highlights that Smarter Balanced "already has launched its first major pilot test for schools" and profiles two participating California school districts. The Pilot Test is successfully surfacing issues related to technology, interface challenges, etc. The article notes that, "Despite the challenges, the assessment process is running well and shows promise for school districts." (The article can be found here: <http://www.centerdigitaled.com/news/Common-Core-Pilot-Tests.html>.)

I mention this article and reference the comments and critics from various quarters because they speak to the intention of the Smarter Balanced Pilot Test—namely, to identify issues and glitches in the test. The Consortium is learning from the technical issues that arise during the Pilot Test in order to be better prepared for the spring Field Test in 2014. The Pilot Test also allows us to gather valuable information about the performance of assessment items and the test delivery system under real world conditions a full 18 months before the assessment system is implemented. The data from the Pilot also will allow Smarter Balanced to conduct initial technical analyses that will be used, for example, to develop our year-to-year growth scale.

The reports from schools and teachers to date have been overwhelmingly positive, though some schools have experienced difficulties with the items and test interface and other things. I want to emphasize that issues raised under the Pilot are responded to by Help Desk services for resolution as quickly as possible. Additionally, we are logging all Help Desk tickets so we can make sure we implement systemic solutions for the 2014 Field Test and beyond.

In closing, I'd like to remind folks in our Smarter Balanced states that before reacting to media comments about "glitches" or "snafus" with the Smarter Balanced Pilot Test that, fundamentally, if everything were to go perfectly well with the Pilot, we probably would not be learning anything. Central purposes of the Pilot are to present a large (but not complete) set of items via an early version of our delivery system, to collect

sufficient item-level data for analysis, and to seek out and identify issues and glitches in the test.

That said, we will continue to have constituents and stakeholders who need information about the “why and how” of our efforts. To that end, I’ve asked our communications team to gather talking points about the Pilot for state-level PIOs and state leads. Anticipate receiving those updated talking points next week to help you with any stakeholder questions or comments. JW

Announcements

Professional development efforts launched to solicit appointments for state-specific team leaders—As part of Contract-23 Digital Library and Formative Practices and Professional Learning, the Consortium has launched its professional development support program to assist states in the implementation of the Smarter Balanced assessment and transition to the Common Core State Standards. K-12 state leads are identifying state team leaders. These team leaders will oversee the development of a state-specific network of educators that will be trained in building Digital Library resources. State leads can refer to the email distributed on April 3 from sbac@wested.org for details on the team leader solicitation process.

Consortium Contacts Roster and State Lead Webpage launched—K-12 and Higher Education State Leads: The Consortium has launched two new resources to provide a more sufficient outflow of information to state leads and other key stakeholders:

(1) Key Consortium Contacts Roster: The first monthly installment of the Key Consortium Contacts Roster was sent to state leads via email from sbac@wested.org on Friday, April 5, and will be distributed monthly via email to state leads on the first Friday after the first Executive Committee meeting of the month, with more regularly updated versions available on the state lead Collaboration Site page (see below for details).

(2) New State Lead Webpage: A new Collaboration Site page has been created that is exclusively dedicated to providing state leads with increased information and communications resources. Please note that only K-12 and Higher Education State Leads and their delegates are permitted access at this time. Links were provided in the April 5 email sent to state leads from sbac@wested.org.

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.

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

Can students use their Chromebooks to complete the assessment?

Yes, students may test on Chromebooks. For more information about supported technology and technology requirements, please refer to the Smarter Balanced Technology Strategy Framework and System Requirements Specifications posted on the Smarter Balanced website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/technology/>.

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Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd—Project Management Partner

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