

## Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

### Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 110

Week ending Friday, April 12, 2013

#### Top News This Week

- Special invitation to Chiefs to attend 4/23 Governing States meeting for Field Test planning
- Strategies for educator recruitment meeting 4/16
- Finance Committee member recommendations
- Formative Assessment Advisory Panel convenes in Las Vegas 4/17–18
- Collaboration Conference materials 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. On March 23, 2013, Smarter Balanced notified Governing and Advisory state leads that the Consortium would release a more complete and more broadly available "practice test" in lieu of the Volunteer Pilot assessment, that the change from a Volunteer Pilot to Practice Test does not impact current testing in support of the scientific Pilot, and that all schools signed up for the scientific Pilot would continue testing as scheduled. In order to create a better understanding and awareness among our stakeholders on the matter I provided a more extensive explanation of the rationale for the change in my Weekly Update on March 25. During the week I was made aware of the need to broaden stakeholder awareness and understanding of the Practice Test.

Here is the basic background information from my comments:

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.

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.

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

I have instructed the Communications Director to develop Talking Points on this message and distribute them to K-12 Governing and Advisory States and PIOs on Tuesday, April 16, 2013. JW

### **Announcements**

Special invitation to Chiefs to attend 4/23 Governing States meeting for Field Test planning—At the next Governing States meeting on April 23, Smarter Balanced will be seeking input from states on their interest in different levels of engagement and use of the Smarter Balanced Field Test. In particular, we want to explore and discuss:

- Options that we should either pursue or that may emerge to minimize (or eliminate) the need for “double-testing” in 2014, and
- Feasibilities related to meeting requests from several states that want to use 2014 as an “early adoption” accountability year.

Due to the importance of these topics to states, a special invitation is extended to Chiefs from Governing States to attend the April 23 Governing States meeting at 10:00 a.m. Pacific. The discussion will be informed by the information gathered during previous conversations with Chiefs and State Leads and from recent conversations with USED. The Chiefs’ input will help the Consortium move forward with planning and represent the wishes of our states as we talk to USED on these topics. Please see the April 9 email sent from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org) for WebEx and conference call details.

Strategies for educator recruitment meeting 4/16—Governing State K-12 leads: Please join us on

Tuesday, April 16, 2013, from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. Pacific for an open discussion of strategies for educator recruitment for the following Smarter Balanced activities:

- Formative Assessment Digital Library: State Leadership Teams and State Networks of Educators
- Item Development for the Field Test: Item Authors, Item Reviewers, Data Reviewers
- Scoring for the Pilot Test: Range-Finding Teams

During the meeting, state leads will have an opportunity to learn about each activity, share successful recruiting strategies, and ask questions. Please see the April 10 email sent from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org) for WebEx and conference call details.

Finance Committee member recommendations—Governing State K-12 and Higher Education Leads: The Consortium seeks your assistance in identifying qualified individuals from your state to serve on Smarter Balanced's Finance Committee. This four-person committee will assist the Chief Operating Officer, Tony Alpert, in managing the Consortium's budget and financial policies. Membership terms will be segmented as either two-year or four-year terms. We hope that you will consider both employees within your state departments of education and institutions of higher education as possible candidates. Please see the 4/11 email sent from [sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org) for more information on the recommendations which are requested by April 26.

Formative Assessment Advisory Panel convenes in Las Vegas 4/17–18—The first meeting of the Formative Assessment Advisory Panel will occur in Las Vegas on April 17-18 to begin the development of Digital Library Quality Criteria Policies. The policies will be used to evaluate and approve the resources in the Smarter Balanced Digital Library. Panel members represent diverse expertise in classroom instruction, formative assessment, support for English language learners, gifted education, special education, English language arts, mathematics, online learning, and rural and urban education. The members include:

- Dr. Lynne Anderson-Inman
- Dr. Bridget Dalton
- Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond
- Dr. Diane Heacox
- Dr. Margaret Heritage
- Dr. Joan Herman
- Dr. John Hill
- Dr. Yvette Jackson
- Dr. Henry Kepner
- Dr. Katherine McKnight
- Valerie L. Mills
- Dr. David Pearson
- Dr. James Popham
- Dr. Maria Ruiz-Primo

Collaboration Conference materials available—Materials handed out during the Collaboration Conference have been posted on the Consortium's internal Collaboration Site and can be found at: <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/meetings/collaboration-conference-march2013>.

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](mailto: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](mailto: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](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 the Smarter Balanced release of the Practice Test affect the Pilot Test schools?*

No. Pilot Test schools will continue with their schedule.

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**Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**

WestEd—Project Management Partner

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