

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 113

Week ending Friday, May 3, 2013

Top News This Week

- New Chief Technology Officer (CTO) joins the Consortium staff
- Updated ALDs and College Content-readiness Policy 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. Members of Smarter Balanced were among the more than 14,000 leading education scholars and researchers who attended the 94th American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting and the 75th annual meeting of the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME) held in San Francisco (4/27–5/1) to examine the major issues and challenges facing students, educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders. The theme of this year's meeting was "Education and Poverty: Theory, Research, Policy, and Praxis."

Smarter Balanced was well represented at the meetings. In attendance were Executive Committee Co-Chairs Deb Sigman and Joseph Martineau; Executive Committee members Michael Hock and Bev Young; and staff members Marty McCall, Shelbi Cole, Magda Chia, and myself. Several of us presented papers and served both as presenters and discussants in AERA and NCME sessions.

During the sessions prominent scholars and other national voices discussed the latest research and emerging trends:

- Student assessment
- Equity in higher education
- Immigrant education
- The role of education schools/colleges in education reform
- For-profit education and low-income students
- School safety and bullying
- Early education
- Technology and learning
- Affirmative Action
- The role of social media in reducing poverty
- Other key issues

A highlight of the AERA meeting was U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan's speech "Choosing the Right Battles: Remarks and a Conversation." The speech makes a strong argument in favor of high-quality assessments aligned to rigorous standards. Duncan mentions the assessment consortia on a couple occasions, and notes that the debut of next-generation assessments in 2014-15 is just the first step toward more authentic measures of student performance. The full text is available at this link:

<http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/choosing-right-battles-remarks-and-conversation>. JW

Announcements

New Chief Technology Officer joins the Consortium staff—On April 22, Brandt Redd joined the Consortium as its Chief Technology Officer. As CTO, Brandt will ensure that the Smarter Balanced assessment system is supported by a robust technology infrastructure. Brandt was most recently a senior technology officer for education programs at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation where he provided technical guidance for the Shared Learning Collaborative (SLC), a collaborative project with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and several states. The CTO position was filled in partnership with the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) as part of an ongoing effort to address the technology readiness needs of states for next-generation assessments. Brandt has three decades of experience in the information technology sector. He co-founded Folio Corporation, an innovator in electronic publishing software, and Agilix Labs, a developer of learning solutions. In a diverse career, he has served as a software engineer, project manager, database administrator, chief scientist, and chief technology officer for companies like Ancestry.com. He can be reached at brandt.redd@smarterbalanced.org.

Updated ALDs and College Content-readiness Policy available—The revised initial definition of the College Content-readiness Policy was approved by Governing States and has been included in the updated achievement level descriptors documents for ELA/literacy and mathematics. These documents can be found on the Consortium's external website at: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/achievement-level-descriptors-and-college-readiness/>

Braille technology survey sent to states—K-12 State Leads: Smarter Balanced is requesting state lead support in conducting a survey regarding their state's usage of technology to support visually impaired students. The survey was developed by the CCSSO ASES (Assessing Special Education Students) SCASS and is designed to be distributed to teachers of visually impaired students. The information collected from the survey will be used to inform the Consortium's decisions about serving the assessment needs of these students. Please see the April 22 email sent from sbac@wested.org for details on how to share the survey within your state. Participants are asked to respond by May 13.

Resources

Student Achievement Partners upgrade website—Student Achievement Partners' upgraded website (www.achievethecore.org) now includes:

- New resources in ELA/literacy and mathematics including additional Common Core–aligned materials and resources for struggling students;
- Essential actions for school and district leaders, accompanied by CCSS-aligned tools and resources;
- Two new professional development modules including PowerPoints, videos, facilitator's instructions, and hands-on activities;
- Evidence guides for instructional practice, designed as developmental tools, that provide specific guidance for what the CCSS for ELA/literacy and mathematics look like in planning and practice; and
- Information on how educators can support the Common Core beyond their school communities.

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

What happens after Smarter Balanced assessments are implemented in the 2014-15 school year?

In March 2013, Smarter Balanced Governing States accepted recommendations from the Sustainability Task Force, including a scope of services and a plan to engage with the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) at UCLA's Graduate School of Education and Information Studies as an ongoing affiliate. This approach will provide access to faculty expertise and research support and offer a full array of administrative services that the Consortium requires after the conclusion of the federal grant in 2014. Starting in 2014-15, and carrying forward from there, Smarter Balanced will continue to be a state-led organization committed to providing high-quality assessment tools and information to educators and policymakers in our member states. We will not be seeking any additional federal funding for development work. Rather, our ongoing development and continuous improvement will be integrated into our overall sustainability efforts, all of which will be governed by the decisions of our member states.

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Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd—Project Management Partner

sbac@wested.org

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