

## Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

### Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 114

Week ending Friday, May 10, 2013

#### Top News This Week

- CTB selected for Field Test Item & Task Writing and Pilot & Field Test Scoring contract

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. We are entering the final phases of another milestone in the development of the Smarter Balanced assessment system—the completion of the Consortium's Pilot testing. Earlier this spring, the state-led Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium launched the Pilot Test of next-generation assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. Involving close to a million students in more than 5,000 schools in 21 states, the Pilot Test is one of the largest trial runs of an assessment in U.S. history.

The four-year development timeline developed by Smarter Balanced includes two large-scale tests of the assessment system prior to implementation in the 2014-15 school year. Administered from February through May 2013, the Pilot Test is allowing the Consortium to evaluate, under real-world conditions, the performance both of assessment items and of the online test delivery system. Results of the Pilot Test will shape the development of the items and the test delivery software for the Field Test, scheduled for spring 2014.

The Pilot Test included 5,000 assessment items and performance tasks developed in 2012 with the help of K-12 teachers and higher education faculty from Smarter Balanced Governing States. Smarter Balanced will use information from the Pilot Test to:

- Conduct technical analyses on the stability of the reporting scales we intend to use;
- Evaluate the performance and ease-of-use of the testing software;
- Review the effectiveness of the online tools and student supports, ensuring that they provide improved access to the assessment for all students, as intended;
- Analyze assessment items and tasks to make sure they are free from bias;
- Explore different scoring options for our open-response questions; and
- Look closely at how well our performance tasks are working, where students apply their knowledge and skills in math and ELA to solve real-world problems.

So, as you can see, we have a lot of things going on in the Pilot—but all of it is focused on the items and the delivery system. In a way, this is a “test of the test,” not a test of the students. For that reason, we aren't able at this point to provide student-level results from the Pilot. As of today 523,680 students have participated in the Pilot, and we still have a couple of weeks to go. Finally, the Pilot Test has helped member states to gain familiarity with the technical specifications for online testing, including hardware availability and bandwidth requirements. Data from the Pilot Test will allow Smarter Balanced to model server loads for the operational assessment and scale up capacity to deliver a robust and stable online

assessment system.

Due to the overwhelming demand for access to the Pilot Test, states in Smarter Balanced decided to design and release a “Practice Test” for ELA and math in grades 3–8 and 11 on May 29. The Practice Test will be publicly available online, allowing teachers, parents, and students across the country to experience next-generation assessments aligned to the Common Core for the first time. For the Consortium, the Practice Test provides multiple opportunities to engage with core partners and reach out to new audiences, including an increased focus on district-level educators and the public. The rollout of the Practice Test also provides clear evidence that the work of Smarter Balanced is on track and on time.  
JW

### **Announcements**

CTB selected for Field Test Item & Task Writing and Pilot & Field Test Scoring contract—CTB has been selected as the item development and scoring management contractor that will be responsible for the development and scoring of all items and tasks for the Field Test; the completion of all studies for peer review of the item development and scoring for the Field Test event; the scoring of Pilot Test items and tasks; and the completion of a data review of Pilot and Field Test items and the revision of items as necessary to be included in the item pool. CTB will be assisted in this work through subcontracts with a number of additional assessment service providers.

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](mailto: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/>

### **In The News**

*Ed Source*, 5/9/2013

John Fensterwald interview with Executive Director, Joe Willhoft

<http://www.edsource.org/today/2013/common-core-test-is-on-track-state-board-told/31768#.UYudybXktyx>

### **Resources**

Student Achievement Partners website—Student Achievement Partners have recently upgraded their website ([www.achievethecore.org](http://www.achievethecore.org)) to include:

- 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](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 Smarter Balanced assessments replace the SAT and ACT?*

No. The 11th grade summative assessment is not designed to be a college admissions test. Rather, it is designed to help students and higher education institutions better gauge which students leave high school prepared for credit-bearing work in English and math. That's a different question than whether or not students should be admitted. Colleges and universities often admit students who are not immediately ready for credit-bearing coursework. Additionally, colleges and universities vary in how much they rely upon the SAT and ACT, and in the scores on those tests they expect students to meet. So, we believe institutions of higher education will continue to rely on scores from the SAT and ACT in the admissions process.

A related area that Smarter Balanced is working on is to coordinate with member states to see how Smarter Balanced results will most effectively be reported to the colleges and universities that students choose.

### **Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**

WestEd—Project Management Partner  
[sbac@wested.org](mailto:sbac@wested.org)

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