

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 117

Week ending Friday, May 31, 2013

Top News This Week

- Practice Test launched on Wednesday, May 29
- Item Quality Review Panel convened on May 20–21
- Technology Readiness Calculator available
- Smarter Balanced to present at symposium on the reports of Gordon Commission on Wednesday, June 12

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. Thank you! Thank you! I personally want to thank each member of the state-led Smarter Balanced team for your truly amazing accomplishments. On May 24th the Consortium completed the unprecedented Pilot Test and five days later successfully launched the free public online Practice Test that gives students, teachers, parents, administrators, policymakers, and other interested stakeholders an opportunity to experience the online testing environment. There are two other major accomplishments this month that must be acknowledged:

First, the posting of the Test Administration and Student Access Work Group's draft Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Accessibility and Accommodations Framework for review by state and national organizations at <https://wested.box.com/smarterbalanced-aa-framework>.

- Grounded in current research and a deep understanding of the current diversity of accessibility policies and practices across state and national assessment systems, the Smarter Balanced Accessibility and Accommodations Framework provides the conceptual underpinning for accessibility approaches, accessibility tools and accommodation options, and implementation guidance for Smarter Balanced assessments.
- Based on feedback provided by states, advisory panels on English language learners and students with disabilities, and national organizations such as the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), this revised version of the Framework represents a significant step toward accessibility and accommodations policies that contribute to more accurate and valid measures of achievement and growth for all students, regardless of visual, auditory, linguistic, or physical needs.
- Consolidated feedback on behalf of organizations is encouraged. The deadline for feedback is June 14th. Upload feedback via the form located at:
<https://www.smartsheet.com/b/form?EQBCT=aa6233fe1d524544a7a56643de9f9bf8>

Second, the posting of a Technology Readiness Calculator on our website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org> (find details in the announcement section below). This easy-to-use tool (I used it at my home to check the "readiness" of my home system) was developed by members of our California team, and is a quick way to evaluate how many days of testing will be needed under different

scenarios of equipment, bandwidth, and hours-per-day of availability.

Together, the Practice Tests, the Accessibility and Accommodations Framework, and the Technology Readiness Tool are further evidence that the Smarter Balanced Assessment System is on track and moving forward. JW

Announcements

Practice Test launched on Wednesday, May 29—Smarter Balanced released the Practice Tests for grades 3–8 and 11 in both English language arts/literacy and mathematics. The Practice Tests include test questions with some of the same features that students will experience in 2014-15, including selected-response items, constructed-response items, technology-enhanced items, and performance tasks in ELA/literacy.

The Practice Tests do not include all the features of the operational assessments. For example, students and teachers will not receive reports or scores from the Practice Tests. Although Smarter Balanced assessments will be computer adaptive, the Practice Tests follow a fixed-form model. By fall 2013, Smarter Balanced will make enhancements to the Practice Tests, including the addition of performance tasks in mathematics, accommodations for students with disabilities in additional grades, and scoring rubrics.

The tests provide a preview of the Smarter Balanced assessments, but they do not encompass the full range of content that students may encounter on the operational assessments and should not be used to guide instructional decisions.

The Practice Tests are freely available on the Smarter Balanced website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/practice-test/>. These tests can be accessed by students, teachers, parents, and other interested parties throughout this summer and the 2013-14 school year.

Item Quality Review Panel convened on May 20–21—The Item Quality Review Panel convened in Las Vegas to discuss three critical aspects of the item development process: quality criteria, item specifications, and archetypes. The panel members (listed below) who represent content expertise and expertise in services to underrepresented students met as a whole group to discuss the design of the Smarter Balanced assessment and the goals of the Field Test item development. Then, in content-specific groups, the panel members, Smarter Balanced staff and work group representatives, and contractor staff discussed key areas of focus and made recommendations to improve item development.

Dr. P. David Pearson
Dr. Donald Deshler
Dr. Douglas Hartman
Edward Bosso
Dr. Elfrieda Hiebert
Dr. Guadalupe Valdes
Dr. Sandra Murphy
Dr. Alan Schoenfeld
Dr. Bill McCallum
Estelle Woodbury
Dr. Francis (Skip) Fennell
Dr. Guillermo Solano-Flores
Dr. Jason Zimba
Dr. Karen Fuson
Dr. Patrick Callahan
Steve Leinwand

Technology Readiness Calculator available—A Technology Readiness Calculator is available to help schools estimate the number of days and associated network bandwidth required to complete Smarter Balanced assessments. This tool allows districts and schools to enter the number of students, number of

computers, and number of hours per day that computers are available for testing. The calculator is available through the Technology page of the Smarter Balanced website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/technology/>.

Smarter Balanced to present at symposium on the reports of Gordon Commission on Wednesday, June 12—The reports call for state and federal policymakers to make substantial changes to K-12 assessments and re-direct the existing focus on the use of test results. The event is co-sponsored by the UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, the University of Southern California Rossier School of Education, and the Gordon Commission on the Future of Assessment in Education. In addition to Dr. Gordon's presentation, the afternoon symposium will include brief presentations from Commission members Eva Baker and Louis Gomez from UCLA's Graduate School of Education & Information Studies as well as other leading education experts. Representing the consortia developing technology-based assessments to measure the Common Core State Standards are Tony Alpert, Chief Operating Officer of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, and Allison Jones from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers.

In The News

Support the Common Core

The Common Core State Standards are designed to provide clear, consistent learning goals that will help prepare all students for success in college and the workplace. Development of the standards was state-led and bipartisan.

Recently, educators, newspaper editorial boards, and business and community leaders have stepped forward to explain why they support the Common Core. It is more important than ever to share accurate information about the standards and how they support student success—through newsletters, websites, and social media. The resources below can help dispel misperceptions and showcase the broad support for the Common Core.

- Michael Gerson, former speechwriter for President George W. Bush, wrote about the importance of establishing higher education standards in the *Washington Post*: <http://wapo.st/117BD01>.
- Jack Warner, executive director and CEO of the South Dakota Board of Regents, explained how the standards support economic prosperity in the *Argus Leader*: <http://argusne.ws/19tO3HC>.
- The editorial board of the *Kansas City Star* explained why moving forward with the Common Core is the right approach for students: <http://bit.ly/13CXyhq>.
- The Foundation for Excellence in Education set the record straight on common myths about the standards: <http://bit.ly/12mdkmQ>.
- Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee discussed the standards on his radio show with Business Roundtable President and former Michigan Governor John Engler: <http://bit.ly/15a0KYB>.
- A group of more than 70 business leaders explained why they support the Common Core in a letter printed in the New York Times: <http://bit.ly/117fRd8>.

California Department of Education, 5/29/2013

News release: "Assembly Approves Overhaul of Public School Testing"

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr13/yr13rel61.asp>

T.H.E. Journal, 5/29/2013

Article: "Smarter Balanced Releases Practice Common Core Tests"

<http://thejournal.com/articles/2013/05/29/smarter-balanced-releases-practice-common-core-tests.aspx>

Education Week, 5/29/2013

Blog post: "Common-Core Online Practice Tests Unveiled"

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/DigitalEducation/2013/05/common_core_unveils_practice_t.html

New Hampshire Public Radio, 5/29/2013

Article: "Practice Test For NECAP Replacement Released"
<http://www.nhpr.org/post/practice-test-necap-replacement-released>

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

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) (<http://www.cse.ucla.edu/>) 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.

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 and territories.

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

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