

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 121

Week ending Friday, June 28, 2013

Top News This Week

- Executive Committee member election process 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 the 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. Last week, folks from Smarter Balanced states and members of the Smarter Balanced staff played key roles in the 2013 CCSSO National Conference on Student Assessment (NCSA), held at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center at National Harbor in Maryland from June 19 to June 22.

NCSA is the premier forum for assessment practitioners to share and discuss what's happening in the world of educational assessments at the state and federal levels. As the program notes indicate: "A major focus of NCSA is that assuring that each student—regardless of his or her circumstances—should be prepared for life, meaningful work, and citizenship. Through transforming student assessment systems, NCSA is dedicated to creating a personalized system of education that engages and motivates students to succeed in a world that is increasingly diverse and globalized, and technology-rich." Since 1971, NCSA has been a trusted forum for assessment practitioners to engage in discussion and debate on emerging trends in education and educational assessments. In addition to state-level curriculum and assessment leaders, NCSA also attracts federal agencies, test publishers, educational consulting companies, university faculty, and organizations supporting technology, education, and business.

Presenters from Smarter Balanced Chiefs, K-12 leads, and staff included Michael Hock (VT), Tom Luna (ID), Alan Burke (WA), Erick McCormick and Les Morse (AK), Jason Glass (IA), Michael Meunks (MO), Cindy Sharp (NV), Gay Pinkner (SD), and Juan D'brot (WV). Presenters from Smarter Balanced staff included Jaci King, Marty McCall, Magda Chia, Tony Alpert, and myself. WestEd was also represented, with presentations by Carole Gallagher and Stanley Rabinowitz. Many other individuals from Smarter Balanced states also contributed, and I apologize to those I have left off this list. Suffice it to say, I'm really proud of the role Smarter Balanced members played in making this year's NCSA conference such a success.

I really can't close these notes without a special thanks to the coordinating team at CCSSO, under Scott Norton's leadership, and the partnership efforts from the Center for Assessment, particularly Scott Marion and Marianne Perie. Thanks, all, for a great conference. JW

Announcements

Executive Committee member election process launched—Nominations are now being accepted for the position of K-12 Executive Committee member, to fill the remainder of the term held by Dan Hupp. The term of this position runs through September 30, 2014. This position is one of four at-large K-12 seats on the Executive Committee. (The other seats on the Executive Committee are two co-chairs, two higher education representatives, and one representative for the State of Washington as fiscal agent.) All nominees must come from a Governing State and have approval from their Chief State School Officer

indicating support for participation. Anyone can nominate a candidate, and individuals can nominate themselves. Nominations close on Wednesday, July 10. Once the slate of nominees is finalized, the Governing State leads will vote to select the new EC member.

State Toolkit on Communication and Messaging available—Smarter Balanced is pleased to provide an exciting new resource to support its member states. The **State Toolkit for Communication and Implementation** includes:

- **Six Resource Modules:** a set of three communications modules about Smarter Balanced and specific state's context, operations modules on cost and technology, and an implementation module. Each of these modules includes sample materials from other states as well as tools and templates for helping the state's team customize to your state's needs.
- **A Workshop-based Approach to customizing each Module:** facilitator guides, agendas, and additional questions and tips. We recommend this approach because, based on experiences in other states, it will enable your team and key stakeholders to create customized modules in an efficient fashion, while also building buy-in and alignment along the way.

Executive Director Joe Willhoft announced this new resource in a message to Chiefs and asked them to designate a senior staff person in the state education agency to oversee the work necessary to customize these resources for state use. States may either convene a task force for this purpose or assign this responsibility to an existing committee. In either case, inclusion of key stakeholders including higher education is recommended. Smarter Balanced held a webinar for Chiefs' designees on Wednesday, June 26, as a first step in the State Toolkit for Communication and Implementation process.

Career Readiness Task Force selected—Smarter Balanced is pleased to announce the selection of the Career Readiness Task Force. The task force is composed of career education leaders from K-12 and higher education, who were nominated by Governing States. The task force is charged with reviewing available models and developing recommendations for describing student performance on the Smarter Balanced summative assessment in relation to academic readiness for postsecondary career education and training. The task force will begin its work this summer and will deliver its recommendations to the Consortium prior to Thanksgiving. States will then have several opportunities to review and comment on a draft policy prior to a state vote planned for the spring 2014 Collaboration Conference.

Governing States and State Leadership Teams invited to attend a webinar on Quality Criteria for the Digital Library—Governing States and State Leadership Teams were invited to participate in a webinar that introduced the Digital Library Quality Criteria on Wednesday, June 26. The webinar provided background on the development of the Quality Criteria as well as an overview of the rating system to be used for resources. In addition, Formative Assessment Practices/Transition to the Common Core Work Group members explained how State Leadership Teams and State Networks of Educators will use the Quality Criteria to evaluate resources for the Digital Library starting in late August.

State Leads invited to Procurement Consortia Webinar—K-12 state leads were invited to attend a webinar on Monday, June 24, regarding the formation of procurement consortia. The webinar provided a forum for states to share information on opportunities to form procurement consortia.

In The News

Huffington Post, 6/26/13

Article: "Teacher In Student's Shoes: Trying The Common Core Exam"

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/youth-radio-youth-media-international/teacher-in-students-shoes_b_3504258.html

Education Week, 6/26/13

Article: "Common Core: Setting the Record Straight"

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/06/18/36laine.h32.html?tkn=VQUFmoFE7JOUyc0muVYGQra32h5kEm86d0RR&cmp=clp-edweek>

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 6/22/13

Article: "Common Core: conservative to the core"

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/opinion/common-core-conservative-to-the-core-b9938033z1-212570341.html>

Mid Valley News, 6/21/13

Article: "Smarter Balanced Releases Online Tests for Students"

<http://www.midvalleynews.com/news/2013/06/21/smarter-balanced-releases-online-tests-for-students/>

The Washington Post, 6/19/13

Article: "Common Core standards are a boon for schools"

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/common-core-standards-are-a-boon-for-schools/2013/06/19/8042fe84-cbaf-11e2-8845-d970ccb04497_story.html

The Detroit News, 6/11/13

Article: "Legislature makes a mistake on Common Core"

<http://www.detroitnews.com/article/20130611/OPINION01/306110007#ixzz2W6tJ69Te>

The Whiteboard Advisors June 2013 Survey, 6/18/2013

<http://www.whiteboardadvisors.com> (you must register to read the survey: <http://eepurl.com/nW3D>)

The survey introduction notes that there were significant shifts in perceptions of the assessment consortia:

- Insiders give higher marks to both Common Core assessment consortia, but 63 percent still see the PARCC consortia as being on the wrong track. Fifty-four percent of insiders now say the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium is on the right track, marking a significant shift this month.
- On slide 9 you can see the right track/wrong track results over the past 13 months. The "right track" number for Smarter Balanced increased in June to 54 percent—up from 26 percent in May and the highest figure since the survey began. PARCC also increased more modestly to 37 percent from 22 percent in June.

In addition, there were some positive verbatim comments from respondents (although others continue to be negative), including:

- "Smarter [Balanced] has already started to pilot its assessments, has been very savvy about procurement, and has a decent sustainability plan. Almost none of this has been covered by the media and/or discussed by education policy folks (do they even know?). As far as implementation goes Smarter seems to be leading the pack."
- "SBAC is chugging along and PARCC is back on track."

Again, it's important to caution against reading too much into the month-to-month results of this small and anonymous survey. However, the release of the Practice Tests certainly provided an opportunity for the Consortium to showcase the significant progress to date.

Idaho Education News, 6/21/13

Article: "Common Core: Idaho to road-test exams in 2014"

<http://www.idahoednews.org/news/common-core-idaho-will-road-test-exams-in-2014/>

Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, 6/2013

Article: "Criteria for Higher-Quality Assessment"

http://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/criteria-higher-quality-assessment_0.pdf

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 if my school or district does not have the infrastructure to support computer adaptive testing?

Smarter Balanced is committed to helping states transition successfully to next-generation assessments. The assessments are being designed to work with the computing resources in schools today. The assessments can be offered on very old operating systems and require minimal processors and memory (for example, the summative assessment can be delivered using computers with 233 MHz processors and 128 MB RAM that run Windows XP). Likewise, the file size for individual assessment items will be very small, to minimize the network bandwidth necessary to deliver the assessment online. A 600-student middle school could test its students using only one 30-computer lab. To assist states that have not yet made the transition to online testing, the Consortium also will offer a paper-and-pencil option for the first three years of operational testing. For more information about technology requirements, visit the Technology page (<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/technology/>).

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

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