

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 122

Week ending Friday, July 5, 2013

Top News This Week

- Reminder: Executive Committee member nominations due
- Practice Test scoring guides released

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. Happy day after Independence Day! I hope you all had an enjoyable and safe holiday in celebration of our nation's independence. My wife and I live on a bit of a slope, so from our back deck we can see quite a few houses off into the distance. Every 4th of July we enjoy sitting out there in the evening to watch the myriad of small-family fireworks displays going off, and we always are struck by the fact that, all across the country, small gatherings of friends and families come together to share a celebration of this special day we have in common.

Now, from the sublime to the ridiculous: In this week's assessment comments, I need to dispel a misconception that came to my attention earlier this week. An email sent on June 18 to state Title I directors from NASTID, the National Title I Association, contained a statement that Smarter Balanced may be "running out of money," and that we "are working hard [sic] and fast but are running out of time to complete the fairly complex set of actions that they are required to complete." I can only say I was surprised to read this, as both statements are patently false (except for the "working hard" part) and were made absent any consultation with any of the Smarter Balanced staff or our Project Management Partner, WestEd. We are not "running out of money" except in the sense that our grant runs through September 2014 and we are obligated to have expended our grant funds by that time. So, in one sense, yes, we are "running out of money," but that's because we are using grant resources according to the expenditure schedule laid out in our Master Work Plan.

And, reporting that we are "running out of time" is equally troubling. One of the things that Smarter Balanced states are rightfully proud of is the fact that we have continued to meet our benchmark milestones through the course of our work. Significant examples of our progress include: the release of sample items last October; successful completion of a Pilot Test this spring, which was delivered to students via the Smarter Balanced testing software; the adoption in March by the Chiefs of our Governing States of a sustainability plan for the continuation of services after the federal grant expires; a detailed description of cost structures of the various assessment options once we go operational in 2014-15; and the release of online Practice Tests in ELA/literacy and mathematics for all grades 3-8 and 11, which can be accessed directly from our website. This is just a short list of accomplishments, and I can't possibly list all the things we have done and are working on. Suffice it to say, we do not see any substantial impediments that would prevent us from delivering our full system of assessments as planned in the fall of 2014.

Through this week's comments, I want to ask all of our state K-12 leads to please re-assure their Title I colleagues that (to borrow a phrase we have frequently used) "Smarter Balanced is on schedule and on

budget.” JW

Announcements

Executive Committee member nominations due—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.

Practice Test scoring guides released—Practice Test scoring guides for grades 3–8 and 11 (ELA/literacy and mathematics) and scoring guides for grades 3, 7, and 11 Braille (mathematics) were posted on Monday, July 1, to the Practice Test portal:

http://sbac.portal.airast.org/Practice_Test/resources.html#scoringGuides. Scoring guides for the remaining materials will be posted on August 15, 2013.

In The News

NPR, 7/1/13

Interview: “Education Program's Data Collection on Kids Angers Critics”

<http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=197713655&m=197713666>

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>

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

We are making some changes. Answering Open Questions will resume on Friday, July 12, 2013.

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd—Project Management Partner

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mc/G