

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 126

Week ending Friday, August 2, 2013

Top News This Week

- Technical Advisory Committee met in Chicago on July 25–26
- Wyoming Becomes a Governing State

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. Today Jeff Nellhaus from PARCC and I presented to the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), which is the policy board that governs the National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as NAEP and often referred to as "the Nation's Report Card." We have been asked to present to NAGB annually since both Smarter Balanced and PARCC began, primarily to bring the NAGB members up to date with our progress. So, I've come to view our presentations sort of as benchmarks of our and PARCC's development. This year Jeff and I each shared only a few slides, as a quick review of major accomplishments and to list the tasks that lie ahead for the next 14 months. As I thought about what to say to NAGB and reflected on developments across the past twelve months, I was encouraged by the accumulated progress we've made over the past year. A few of our major accomplishments include:

- Establishing parameters for **test length**, which provides states with a metric to use for their planning. Setting an overall test length is always a "three bears" problem: there is no reason to make a test longer than it needs to be ("too hot" in the three-bears metaphor), and it shouldn't be so short that it doesn't adequately assess the full range of knowledge, skills, and deeper thinking embodied in the Common Core (a "too cold" problem). We think we have it "just right," with an overall length that affords us the opportunity to fully assess the Common Core, including many items that require deep reading and the application of complex skills, while keeping the testing time at about the same length that students in many states currently experience if the tests are assessing reading, on-demand writing, and mathematics.
- Determining a sustainable **business model and pricing** for our assessments as we go forward into 2014-15. In March, our Chiefs approved a business model and pricing structure for the Smarter Balanced assessments. The business model is consistent with our principle of maintaining each state's autonomy to the greatest extent possible, while still adhering to common, Consortium-wide design and implementation procedures. That model establishes a Smarter Balanced enterprise (currently being developed in partnership with CRESST at UCLA) to support common, Consortium-level activities, and allows states to decide which delivery and support mechanism works best for them—be it an open-bid process for assessment delivery services, an adjustment made to a currently operational contract, an arrangement with an entity within the state, or another arrangement. The pricing that we established is well within the bounds of what states whose current tests are more than just multiple-choice "bubble sheets" are spending on their assessments.
- The successful implementation of the 2013 Pilot Test required us to bring together the delivery of several key components of the system, and we have

learned and are learning a lot from that experience. For example, we learned lessons about what does and does not work well when recruiting schools to participate in a multi-state operation, and we are applying those insights to our recruitment plans for the 2014 Field Test. The test administration software we used to deploy the 2013 Pilot Test is an early version of what will become our open-source administration package, giving states, teachers, and students an early look at how the test will appear and at the tools available to students as they take the test. And we have learned about how some of our new types of items and tasks work with students, allowing us to make adjustments and improvements as we write items for the upcoming Field Test.

That's a lot, and it's not nearly everything. Suffice it to say, we're hitting on all cylinders, and moving forward.

Finally, speaking of moving forward, I want to welcome Wyoming as a new Governing State. Wyoming has been a Smarter Balanced Advisory State and recently decided to become a Governing State. With this decision, Wyoming becomes our 23rd Governing State, and joins its colleague states in shaping the Consortium through the policy decisions the states adopt.

Announcements

Technical Advisory Committee met in Chicago on July 25–26—The semiannual meeting of the Smarter Balanced Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was held in Chicago last week; topics included the CAT algorithm, the Digital Library, and Pilot Test analysis.

Wyoming becomes a Governing State—The Consortium is pleased to announce that the Executive Committee has approved Wyoming as a Smarter Balanced Governing State. Smarter Balanced extends a warm welcome to Wyoming and looks forward to its collaboration as we continue to develop the assessment system.

Juan D'Brot elected to Smarter Balanced Executive Committee—Juan D'Brot, State Lead from West Virginia, co-chair of the Smarter Balanced Test Administration/Student Access Work Group, and recent member of the Executive Committee's communication subcommittee, has been elected to the Executive Committee.

Governing States are invited to attend a series of Accessibility and Accommodations webinars— As part of the Consortium's ongoing efforts to develop a common set of accessibility and accommodations guidelines, a series of webinars have been planned for Governing States to discuss the following topics:

- *Reading and Listening: held August 1*
- Scribe and Calculator Use: August 8
- Accessibility and Accommodations Manual Walkthrough: August 13
- Review of Changes to Manual Based on Feedback: September 4

Call-in information was sent to State Leads on July 15, 2013.

In The News

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 8/2/13

Article: "Critics' Math Doesn't Add Up"

<http://www.edexcellence.net/commentary/education-gadfly-daily/common-core-watch/2013/critics-math-doesnt-add-up.html>

Raleigh News & Observer, 8/1/13

Article: "McCrory Proposes Stipends for Master Teachers, Calls for Reduction in Testing"

<http://www.newsobserver.com/2013/08/01/3075444/mccrory-proposes-stipends-for.html>

EdSource, 8/1/13

Article: "California Committed to Move Forward with Common Core Tests as Planned"

<http://www.edsource.org/today/2013/california-committed-to-move-forward-with-common-core-tests-as-planned/36791#.UfpoLG0Uudw>

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 7/24/13

Article: "Chicken Little Goes to School"

<http://www.edexcellence.net/commentary/education-gadfly-daily/flypaper/2013/chicken-little-goes-to-school.html>

Idaho Statesman, 7/23/13

Article: "Reader's View: New Exam Will Help Students Build Critical-Thinking Skills"

<http://www.idahostatesman.com/2013/07/23/2666601/new-exam-will-help-students-build.html#storylink=cpy>

The Washington Times, 7/22/13

Article: "Common Core Can Make America Competitive"

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/jul/22/common-core-can-make-america-competitive/>

The Hechinger Report, 7/18/13

Article: "Why Our Nation Needs Common Standards"

http://hechingerreport.org/content/why-our-nation-needs-common-standards_12662/

Resources

Information Resources: Common Core Standards—Resources relating to the Common Core State Standards can be found at the following links:

- "Impacting the Future" from *Governing Magazine* (September 2011)
http://media.navigatoredd.com/documents/GOV09_Hunt_V.pdf
- Accelerating the College and Career Readiness of the Nation's Students (State Cards) (2011)
http://www.all4ed.org/publication_material/CommonStandardsStateCards
- PTA Parent Guides <http://www.pta.org/4446.htm>
- CoreStandards.org <http://www.corestandards.org/>
- Common Core State Standards Videos <http://www.youtube.com/user/TheHuntInstitute>
- Hunt Institute Implementation Blueprint <http://www.hunt-institute.org/elements/media/files/Blueprint-Number-5-October-2010.pdf>
- The Common Core State Standards Initiative Data Sheet
<http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/siteASCD/policy/CommonCoreStds.pdf>
- The Common Core Implementation Workbook
<http://www.parcconline.org/CommonCoreImplementationWorkbook>
- On the Road to Implementation—Achieving the Promise of the Common Core State Standards http://www.achievethe.org/achievingcommoncore_implementation
- Strong Support, Low Awareness: Public Perception of the Common Core State Standards
<http://www.achievethe.org/PublicPerceptionCCSS>
- Reaching the Goal: Applicability and Importance of the Common Core State Standards to College and Career Readiness <http://www.epiconline.org/publications/documents/ReachingtheGoal-FullReport.pdf>
- Education Policy Improvement Center study: Lining Up: The Relationship Between the Common Core State Standards and Five Sets of Comparison Standards http://www.epiconline.org/publications/documents/LiningUp-FullReport_2011.pdf

Key Facts About the Common Core State Standards—Alliance for Excellent Education publications on the CCSS can be found at the following links: <http://www.all4ed.org/files/CCSSFacts.pdf> and

<http://www.all4ed.org/files/CommonCore101.pdf>

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

Where can I find Practice Test scoring guides?

Scoring guides are now available for download on the Smarter Balanced Portal under “Resources and Documentation” in the Practice Test section:

http://sbac.portal.airast.org/Practice_Test/resources.html#scoringGuides

Currently, we have scoring guides for ELA/Literacy and Mathematics tests for grades 3–8 and 11. Scoring guides for several of the Braille versions of the Practice Tests are also available. We have not yet posted scoring guides for any of the Performance Tasks as we are continuing to refine the scoring procedure based on feedback from the Pilot Test. Support for the materials and documentation for Performance Tasks in ELA/Literacy and Mathematics will be released soon.

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

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