

## Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

### Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 127

Week ending Friday, August 9, 2013

#### Top News This Week

- USED Seeks Input on Assessment Systems Evaluation
- Executive Committee Co-Chair Nominee Solicitation
- Mathematics Assessments Webinar Recording Available Online

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. Sorry about the lateness of this week's Update. Friday, our usual Weekly Update day, got away from us last week and we weren't able to meet the deadline. Again, my apologies.

Last week New York released scores on a new set of assessments aligned to the new Common Core State Standards. Because it was New York, the news was prominently reported in the media, including the New York Times. I'm not usually up to take on the Times, but a particular slant of its story was a little troubling.

The story carried a headline of "Test Scores Sink as New York Adopts Tougher Benchmarks," followed by the lead paragraph stating, "The number of New York students passing state reading and math exams dropped drastically this year, education officials reported on Wednesday, unsettling parents, principals and teachers and posing new challenges to a national effort to toughen academic standards," (emphases added).

While it is factually true that the percent of students passing this year's new assessments is smaller than the percent passing last year's assessments, to characterize this as "sinking" and "dropping" seems off target.

I wonder: If we changed how we report temperature from Fahrenheit to Centigrade, would the Times lead their story by talking about how the temperature has dropped with this new measure? I don't think so.

Frankly, this is very much the same. And, as informed practitioners we need to be vigilant on this point. New assessments aligned to the Common Core are coming into place – be they the ones already issued in Kentucky, these in New York, or the Smarter Balanced or PARCC assessments that will roll out in 2015. We must continue to remind our various publics that lower performance against newer, more rigorous standards does not mean our students know less than they did the year before. Rather, it means we have a new beginning and a new set of goals against which we start measuring progress.

Not to attend to this important, but subtle point, leaves dedicated educators out in the cold, like the one quoted in the Times article who said, "Now we're going to come out and tell everybody that [our students] accomplished nothing this year and we've been pedaling backward?" We need to be sure to remind our teachers, principals, parents and the media that we are not "pedaling backward," but are, instead, just beginning a very challenging but extremely worthy journey forward. JW

## **Announcements**

USED Seeks Input on Assessment Systems Evaluation—Last December, the USED paused its facilitation of peer reviews of state assessment systems as it considers how to revise its evaluation practices to better gauge whether the assessment system is a high quality system that measures college and career readiness. To that end, the ED released this blog post—

<http://www.ed.gov/blog/2013/08/help-ed-improve-how-we-evaluate-state-assessment-systems/>

—that solicits input on how they should reconsider peer review. They are taking comments through the end of September and all Consortium members are encouraged to weigh in.

Executive Committee Co-Chair Nominee Solicitation— Nominations are now being accepted for the position of Executive Committee Co-Chair, to fill the seat that will become vacant upon the expiration of Deb Sigman’s term on September 30, 2013. The term of this position runs through September 30, 2014. 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, August 21, 2013. Once the slate of nominees is finalized, the Governing State leads will vote to select the new EC Co-Chair.

Following the Co-Chair election, Governing States will have the opportunity to elect two Executive Committee members to fill the seats that will become vacant on September 30, 2013.

Mathematics Assessments Webinar Recording Available— On August 5, Shelbi Cole and William McCallum presented a webinar titled “Making Progress in Measuring Math: Updates on the Smarter Balanced Mathematics Assessments”. The webinar recording and slides are posted for State Leads on the Collaboration Site under the Webinars tab.

Technical Advisory Committee met in Chicago on July 25–26—The summer 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. Wyoming is the 23rd Governing State in Smarter Balanced.

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: held 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**

*Ed Weekly*, 8/1/13

Article: PARCC Sees Dip in Confidence Poll of Washington 'Insiders'

[http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/curriculum/2013/08/parcc\\_sees\\_dip\\_in\\_confidence\\_p.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/curriculum/2013/08/parcc_sees_dip_in_confidence_p.html)

*Education Gadfly Daily*, 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: “McCrorry Proposes Stipends for Master Teachers, Calls for Reduction in Testing”

<http://www.newsobserver.com/2013/08/01/3075444/mccrorry-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>

## 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.navigatored.com/documents/GOV09\\_Hunt\\_V.pdf](http://media.navigatored.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](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.achieve.org/achievingcommoncore\\_implementation](http://www.achieve.org/achievingcommoncore_implementation)
- Strong Support, Low Awareness: Public Perception of the Common Core State Standards  
<http://www.achieve.org/PublicPerceptionCCSS>
- Reaching the Goal: Applicability and Importance of the Common Core State Standards to College and Career Readiness <https://www.epiconline.org/files/pdf/ReachingtheGoal-FullReport.pdf>
- Education Policy Improvement Center study: Lining Up: The Relationship Between the Common Core State Standards and Five Sets of Comparison Standard <https://www.epiconline.org/CommonCoreStateStandardsStudies>

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](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).

*Is the federal government using Common Core to collect data about individual students?*

No. Common Core does not require the collection of any data about students; it is simply a set of grade level expectations for knowledge and skills students are expected to acquire in English language arts/Literacy and mathematics.

The federal government is prohibited by law from collecting any personally identifiable data (e.g., name, place and date of birth, SSN, or any information that could be used to distinguish an individual's identity) about individual students. The federal government does not collect data about individual students or have access to data about individual students that states collect.

### **Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**

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