

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Smarter Balanced Weekly Update

Issue 129

Week ending Friday, August 23, 2013

Top News This Week

- Executive Committee Co-Chair election
- Field Test information for schools and districts distributed

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

This week I read with interest the [PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools](#), and I feel that the results present both challenges and opportunities for our work. The survey shows that there is low awareness of the Common Core among the public (62% have not heard of it), and that more than a third of those surveyed (36%) said the increase in testing in public schools to measure academic achievement has hurt school performance, with 41% saying that it made no difference.

While it can be challenging to break through and communicate our work, there are tremendous opportunities to convey the value of assessments for students and how Smarter Balanced assessments will provide real-time information throughout the year and give teachers and parents a better picture of where students are succeeding and where they need help.

The Practice Tests can be a valuable tool as you communicate this work. They are a tangible way to provide opportunities for students, teachers, and parents to experience the features of an online test and gain insight into how Smarter Balanced will assess students' mastery of the Common Core. JW

Announcements

Executive Committee Co-Chair election—On August 22, Governing State Leads were sent a ballot to elect one Executive Committee Co-Chair to fill the term commencing on October 1, 2013. State Leads are requested to return the ballot to sbac@wested.org by Thursday, August 29. In accordance with the Governance document, a Co-Chair must be elected by a quorum of Governing States. All states are encouraged to vote.

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

Field Test information for schools and districts distributed—In an effort to provide both schools and districts with an early understanding of the Field Test commitment and to promote and encourage participation, Smarter Balanced has released an informative and customizable document for Consortium states to distribute. States were sent this document on August 22, along with instructions on how to customize it to reflect different participation and recruitment options.

High School Testing Task Force solicitation (Repeat)— The Consortium is forming a task force among its Governing States to devise a strategy and approach to meet state needs for secure high school testing beyond the grade 11 Smarter Balanced summative assessment. On August 14, Governing State Leads

were sent a link through which they may express interest in joining the task force.

Accessibility and Accommodations Guidelines ready for review (Repeat)— The Test Administration/Student Access Work Group invites state leads to provide input on the draft Accessibility and Accommodations Guidelines. The draft was sent to state leads, along with a survey link by which they may provide input. Feedback may be provided through August 27, and changes made to the document based on feedback received will be presented via webinar on September 4.

Governing States are invited to attend a series of accessibility and accommodations webinars (Repeat)— 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: held August 13*
- *Review of Changes to Manual Based on Feedback: September 4*

Call-in information was sent to state leads on July 15.

In The News

Education Week, 8/15/13

Article: "The New Dropouts? The States Divide on Testing and Accountability"

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/top_performers/2013/08/the_new_dropouts_the_states_divide_on_testing_and_accountability.html?cmp=ENL-EU-VIEWS2

Education Week, 8/13/13

Article: "Relief Tally for Undocumented Youths After One Year of Deferred Action"

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning-the-language/2013/08/relief_for_young_undocumented.html

The Quick & the Ed, 8/9/13

Article: "Perspective on Smarter Balanced Assessment Costs"

<http://www.quickanded.com/2013/08/perspective-on-smarter-balanced-assessment-costs.html>

Resources

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.

Will the spring 2014 Field Test be an adaptive test?

No. Students participating in the 2014 Field Test will have the experience of taking a full Smarter Balanced test in either mathematics or English language arts (ELA)/literacy, or both. The test length for the Field Test is designed to model the test length that we will use in 2015 and beyond, and the Field Test blueprints (e.g., the number of test items on problem solving, the number of items on algebra, etc.) will follow the test blueprints that we will be using in 2015. However, the individual test items that a student will see on the Field Test will not be selected in an adaptive fashion. The 2015 operational assessment will be adaptive, but to do that, we need to have difficulty values for every item in our item pool; the Field Test is how we collect the statistics necessary to establish those item-level difficulty values. Although the Field Test can't be adaptive, we are making sure that each student gets a balance of easy, medium, and challenging items, based on general ratings provided to us by the item writers.

So, what's the bottom line? Each student taking a Smarter Balanced Field Test in the spring of 2014 will take a test that's about the same length and that has the same content coverage as will be seen on the 2015 tests. And, the items themselves will be of varying difficulty. It's just that they simply won't be adaptive.

--

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd - Project Management Partner

sbac@wested.org

www.smarterbalanced.org

nd/G