

Can't see the images in this email? [Click here.](#)

MARCH/APRIL 2013

Vol. 2, Issue 2

Smarter News



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The Smarter Balanced Pilot Test is now well underway, and I'm pleased to report that more than 300,000 students in grades 3-11 have already participated. By May, more than one million students in more than 5,000 schools will take part.

You can learn more about the Pilot Test below, including details about the availability of practice tests for all schools later this spring. The Pilot Test represents an important milestone for the Consortium, providing detailed information about how test items and the technology behind the assessments perform in a real-world setting.

Another critical milestone for Smarter Balanced is developing a long-term sustainability plan once our federal grant is complete in 2014. As part of this planning, Smarter Balanced announced an agreement to develop an affiliation with UCLA's National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST)—one of the premier educational assessment and research centers in the nation. Our sustainability plan will ensure that Smarter Balanced continues to develop and enhance the assessment system in the future.

If you appreciate receiving *Smarter News*, help us spread the word. Forward this email to your colleagues and encourage them to [sign-up](#).

INSIDE THE STATE-LED CONSORTIUM



The third Smarter Balanced Collaboration Conference brought together representatives from the Consortium's member states and territories in Arlington, Va. last month—including chief

What's Inside...

Featured Columns

From the Executive Director
Inside the State-Led Consortium
Supporting Classroom Teachers

Latest Developments

Practice Test Available in May
Pilot Test Gets Positive Reviews
New Common Core Videos for Teachers and Parents
Surveys of Educators Show Greater Awareness of the Common Core

SMARTER BALANCED ASSESSMENT CONSORTIUM

Executive Committee Co-Chairs

Joseph Martineau, Ph.D. - Michigan
Deborah Sigman - California

Executive Committee Members

Michael Hock, Ph.D. - Vermont
Dan Hupp - Maine
Charles Lenth, Ph.D. - Higher Education Representative
Mike Middleton - Washington
Lynette Russell, Ph.D. - Wisconsin
Luci Willits - Idaho
Beverly L. Young, Ph.D. - Higher Education Representative

Smarter Balanced Staff

Joe Willhoft, Ph.D. - Executive Director
Tony Alpert - Chief Operating Officer
Eddie T. Arnold, APR - Director, Strategic Communications and Public Information Officer
Magda Chia, Ph.D. - Director, Support

state school officers, K-12 state leads, higher education leads, work group members, and contractors—to facilitate coordination on key projects.

During a public session, the Governing States voted to accept recommendations from the [Sustainability Task Force](#), including a scope of services and a plan to engage with CRESST at UCLA’s Graduate School of Education and Information Studies as an ongoing affiliate. This approach will provide access to faculty expertise and research support and offer a full array of administrative services that the Consortium requires after the conclusion of the federal grant in 2014.

In addition, state education chiefs approved initial [achievement level descriptors](#) (ALDs)—which distinguish among the levels of student performance in English language arts/literacy and mathematics on the Smarter Balanced assessments. Adoption of the initial ALDs is part of an extensive collaboration between K-12 education agencies and institutions of higher education. The development of the initial ALDs began in October 2012 with collaboration among K-12 teachers and administrators and higher education faculty from two- and four-year colleges and universities representing Smarter Balanced Governing States. A six-month review process engaged a broad array of K-12 teachers, higher education faculty, content experts, and education partners through two rounds of public comment in November and February.

A complete recap of the Smarter Balanced Collaboration Conference is available on the [Smarter Balanced website](#).

for Under-Represented Students
 Shelbi Cole, Ph.D. - Director,
 Mathematics
 Barbara Kapinus, Ph.D. - Director,
 English Language Arts / Literacy
 Jacqueline E. King, Ph.D. - Director,
 Higher Education Collaboration
 Marty McCall, Ph.D. - Lead
 Psychometrician
 Chrystyna V. Mursky, Ph.D. - Director,
 Professional Learning

Governing States

- California
- Connecticut
- Delaware
- Hawaii
- Iowa
- Idaho
- Kansas
- Maine
- Michigan
- Missouri
- Montana
- North Carolina
- New Hampshire
- Nevada
- Oregon
- South Carolina
- South Dakota
- Vermont
- Washington
- Wisconsin
- West Virginia

Advisory States

- Alaska
- North Dakota
- Pennsylvania
- Wyoming

Affiliate Members

- U.S. Virgin Islands

SUPPORTING CLASSROOM TEACHERS



Smarter Balanced is swiftly moving forward with the development of formative assessment tools and resources for teachers—a critical component of a balanced system that also includes summative and interim assessments.

This spring, hundreds of educators will be recruited from Smarter Balanced Governing States to form state networks of educators, charged with providing feedback and guidance on the resources to be included in a Digital Library of formative assessment practices and professional learning resources for educators.

The Digital Library, set to launch in fall 2014, will provide teachers with an online clearinghouse of classroom-based, formative assessment strategies and practices that enhance day-to-day instruction, including resources to

IN THE NEWS

- The [Marin Independent Journal](#) provided details on the administration Smarter Balanced Pilot Test in local schools.
- [The San Diego Union-Tribune](#) reported on the importance of the Common Core and aligned assessments in preparing high school students for college and the workplace.

interpret data and reports from the Smarter Balanced summative and interim assessments.

The state networks of educators will be composed of K-12 educators and faculty from institutes of higher education with expertise in English language arts, mathematics, students with disabilities, and administration.

The work of the networks will be guided by quality criteria policies, developed by the Formative Assessment Advisory Panel, that ensure all Digital Library resources reflect the vision and purpose of the Consortium. Using these criteria, the networks will review existing resources for the Digital Library and recommend additional resources to include.

More information about the development of the Digital Library can be found [here](#).

PRACTICE TEST AVAILABLE IN MAY



With more than a million students signed up to participate in the Smarter Balanced Pilot Test, it's clear that schools are eager to participate in one of the largest pilots of an assessment system in the U.S.

Data from the Pilot Test will allow the Consortium to gather valuable information about the performance of assessment items and the test delivery system 18 months before the assessment system is launched. Participation in the Pilot Test is also an important step for Smarter Balanced member states and territories as they transition to the Common Core and aligned assessments.

The first phase of the Smarter Balanced Pilot Test includes approximately 10 percent of schools in Governing States. These schools were recruited as a part of a scientific sample to ensure that the results of the Pilot Test fully represent the Consortium.

The second phase allows schools to volunteer to participate. Due to the overwhelming demand for access to the Volunteer Pilot assessment, Smarter Balanced will release a more complete and more broadly available "practice test" in late May.

Like the planned Volunteer Pilot, the Practice Test will allow students to experience items that look and function like those found on the Scientific Pilot. The Practice Test will also include performance tasks (not previously planned for the Volunteer Pilot), and will be constructed to follow a test blueprint similar to the blueprint intended for the operational test.

More details about the Pilot Test and the plans for the Practice Test can be found [here](#).

- *The Joplin Globe* reported on how Missouri districts are implementing the Common Core and preparing for the Smarter Balanced assessments—including participating in the Pilot Test.
- *Education Week* reported on a [new study](#) explaining how states can afford higher-quality assessments by reallocating the money they currently spend on state assessments.
- In a Curriculum Matters blog post for *Education Week*, Catherine Gewertz highlights the approval of initial ALDs by Governing States.
- *The Seattle Times* featured an [AP article](#) on Washington state's involvement with the Smarter Balanced Pilot Test.

Alaska Joins the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Alaska has joined the Consortium as an Advisory State. Smarter Balanced now includes 26 member states and territories working collaboratively to develop a next-generation assessment system. As an Advisory State, Alaska may participate in Consortium work groups and provide guidance for the development of the assessment system that will measure college- and career-readiness, and provide actionable information to improve teaching and learning. Read the full release [here](#).

U.S. Virgin Islands Joins Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

The U.S. Virgin Islands became the first Affiliate member of the Consortium. Smarter Balanced Governing States voted in July 2012 to create a new membership category, allowing territories and commonwealths of the United States and/or the Department of Defense

PILOT TEST GETS POSITIVE REVIEWS



Pilot Test:

As teachers and students log on to participate in the Smarter Balanced Pilot Test, communities across the country are learning more about the new assessments through local media coverage. Below is a sampling of perspectives from educators on the

- “As we prepare to implement fully the Common Core State Standards, it’s important that we have next-generation assessments that reflect this change,” said State Superintendent Randy Dorn in a [press release](#). “We need to get this right. The successful implementation of Smarter Balanced assessments is a critical part of our goal to ensure all students are ready for college and careers by the time they graduate from high school.” – *Washington State Superintendent Randy Dorn, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, February 25, 2013*
- “It’s gratifying to see so many schools accept the challenge of taking part in this pilot test, which is an important step toward our goal of creating a testing system that measures how ready our students are for the challenges of a changing world,” said State Superintendent Tom Torlakson in a [press release](#) from the California State Office of the Superintendent. “The immense interest we are seeing reflects the desire among teachers and administrators for California to move toward assessments focused on improving teaching and learning.” – *California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson, California Department of Education, February 20, 2013*
- “We’re excited. We volunteered to do the pilot this year. We want our kids to have experience taking the test, so we’re ready to go.” – *Assistant Superintendent of Schools John Battista, Monroe Patch (Connecticut), February 20, 2013*
- “I think it’s nice to be on the front lines of piloting a program like this. Even though there’s going to be inherently some bugs to work out...we get first peek at what’s going on.” – *Mackinaw High School Principal Alan Kern, M Live (Michigan), February 26, 2013*
- “For us, it’s one of those things, realizing that the bars are gonna be raised a little bit higher. And not that that’s a bad thing, it’s actually a good thing. But it just makes us realize the efforts that we have to put forward to help our students achieve that next level.” – *Wiley Elementary School principal Marc Nelson, KAPP-TV (Washington), February 26, 2013*
- “The pilot test will help ensure that schools will be able to effectively assess students’ progress toward acquiring the knowledge and skills they need for the future. The new assessment system will give parents, teachers and policy makers better tools and information they can use to increase student achievement.” – *Missouri Commissioner of Education Chris L. Nicastro, Farmington Press (Missouri), April 4, 2013*

Education Activity (DoDEA) that support the work of Smarter Balanced to join as Affiliate members. Read the full press release [here](#).

Deb Sigman Elected Co-chair

Deb Sigman, Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction for the California Department of Education, has been elected Executive Committee Co-Chair. Sigman will oversee the work of the Executive Committee and collaborate with Consortium staff, leadership, and advisory committees. Learn more about Deb [here](#).

CA Dept. of Ed Recommends Smarter Balanced Assessments

In a report to the governor and legislature, California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson outlined a plan to replace the state’s current Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program with the Smarter Balanced assessment system in the 2014-15 school year. As a Governing State since June 2011, California plays a leading role in the development of the Smarter Balanced assessment system. View the press release [here](#).

Smarter Balanced Proficiency-Based Learning and Assessments Webinar Available

Smarter Balanced Chief Operating Officer Tony Alpert hosted a webinar with representatives from Missouri to discuss the Consortium’s approach to supporting proficiency-based learning. View the webinar recording [here](#).

Discussion with Higher Education Math Faculty

- "This will provide the state with invaluable information on technology readiness to support moving to (an) online, computer-adaptive assessment, as well as give many Michigan students and educators a direct experience with Smarter Balanced items." – *Director of the Office of Standards and Assessments Vince Dean, Michigan Department of Education, [The Detroit News](#), April 10, 2013*
- "I think what we found out today is going to be helpful in the future," said superintendent Kibbe, who was also pleased the assessments worked on older computers at Westminster Center School. "The kids were comfortable using the technology. It was very interesting to watch." – *Windham Northeast Superintendent Chris Kibbe, [Brattleboro Reformer \(Vermont\)](#), April 10, 2013*

NEW COMMON CORE VIDEOS FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS



The Council of the Great City Schools has developed a suite of video tools that help introduce the public to the Common Core State Standards, equip teachers with a deeper level of understanding of how the standards will affect teaching and learning, and provide parents with a step-by-step guide for what their children will be learning in K-8. Videos and tools include:

- A three-minute [PSA video](#) (in English and Spanish) that illustrates how the new state standards will establish milestones for students at each grade level, and how these standards will help students graduate college- and career-ready.
- A series of 45-minute professional development videos for educators and teachers on how to implement the Common Core in [English language arts/literacy](#) and [mathematics](#).
- Parent roadmaps to the Common Core for [English language arts/literacy](#) and [mathematics](#). These roadmaps show parents what their children will be learning and how they can support that learning in grades K-8 and high school.

SURVEYS OF EDUCATORS SHOW GREATER AWARENESS OF THE COMMON CORE



Several recent surveys demonstrate that states are steadily moving forward with Common Core planning, teachers are more aware of the new state standards and are beginning to implement them, and teachers are optimistic about the impact they will have on student success.

Director of Support for Under-represented Students Magda Chia and Director of Higher Education Collaboration Jacqueline King hosted a webinar with higher education math faculty. The discussion focused on how the Smarter Balanced assessment system can accurately measure mastery of the Common Core State Standards for all students, including English language learners. View the webinar recording [here](#).

Smarter Balanced Update for National Conference of State Legislatures

Executive Director Joe Willhoft provided an update on the Consortium for state legislators and legislative staff in Smarter Balanced member states. View the webinar recording [here](#).

Smarter Balanced Update for Governors' Education Policy Advisors

Executive Director Joe Willhoft and Director of Higher Education Collaboration Jacqueline King provided an update on test development, sustainability, and technology readiness for education policy advisors from Smarter Balanced member states. View the webinar recording [here](#).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION

Can students use their Chromebooks to complete the assessment?

Yes, students may test on Chromebooks. For more information about supported technology and technology requirements, please refer to the Smarter Balanced Technology Strategy Framework and System Requirements Specifications posted on the Smarter Balanced [website](#).

The following reports provide a good pulse on states' progress in implementing the Common Core:

- [The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Challenges for School Leadership](#): Nine in 10 teachers (93%) and principals (90%) surveyed are confident teachers have the skills and ability to implement the new standards. In addition, 93 percent of teachers said "assessments aligned to standards that indicate mastery of concepts" are very helpful or helpful in implementing the new standards.
- [National Survey of Teacher Perspectives on the Common Core](#): This survey provides insights into educators' awareness of the Common Core and the quality of professional development they have received to implement the new standards in the classroom. The survey found that while more than seven in 10 (71%) teachers have had some professional development on the CCSS, more is needed. A similar proportion (72%) agreed that access to aligned assessments would help them feel better prepared to teach to the standards.
- [Moving forward: A National Perspective on States' Progress in Common Core State Standards Implementation Planning](#): This report provides an update on state Common Core implementation. Among the findings: all 47-CCSS adopting states and territories have formal implementation plans, and 21 have fully developed plans in the areas of teacher professional development, curriculum guides, and/or teacher evaluations.

Follow us on Twitter: 

SMARTER NEWS

March/April 2013 Vol. 2 Issue 2

Smarter News is published by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. To contribute an article, please contact Eddie T. Arnold, APR, Director of Strategic Communications and PIO:

Eddie.Arnold@SmarterBalanced.org
or (202) 336-7073. Submissions may be edited for length and tone.

Published by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. To learn more:

- Visit: SmarterBalanced.org
- Email: Info@SmarterBalanced.org
- Call: (202) 336-7073

SmarterBalanced.org

© Copyright 2012

[Click the Unsubscribe link here](#) to be removed from our email list.