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MAY/JUNE 2013

Vol. 2, Issue 3

Smarter News



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As the school year winds down, teachers and students are looking forward to a well-deserved break. Many educators use the summer to participate in professional learning activities. Smarter Balanced is working with educators to engage them in the development of the assessment system and to

provide resources and information on the Common Core and next-generation assessments.

In May, Smarter Balanced announced the availability of [online Practice Tests](#) in grades 3-8 and 11 in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. The Practice Tests provide an important opportunity for teachers, students, parents, and other interested parties to experience the features of online testing and gain insight into how Smarter Balanced will assess students' mastery of the Common Core.

In addition, this summer and fall, Smarter Balanced will work with educators to help develop a digital library of formative assessment and professional development resources. These resources will be developed by teachers, for teachers to improve the quality of information collected through the daily classroom activities of assignments, quizzes, and observation of student work.

Development of the assessment system will continue throughout the summer as we analyze results from the Pilot Test and develop items and tasks for the Field Test next spring. You can keep up with our work all summer long by following Smarter Balanced on [Twitter](#).

INSIDE THE STATE-LED CONSORTIUM

Capitol Hill Briefings

In April, Smarter Balanced held briefings in Washington, DC, to provide an update on the progress of the Consortium.

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SMARTER BALANCED ASSESSMENT CONSORTIUM

Executive Committee Co-Chairs

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

Executive Committee Members

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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 for Under-Represented Students



The events included two Capitol Hill briefings for Senate and House staff. Both briefings were well attended by staff from Smarter Balanced member states and staff from the Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee and the House Education & the Workforce Committee. The meetings provided an opportunity to answer questions and discuss the transition to assessments aligned to the Common Core.

The Consortium also held a stakeholder briefing that was attended by more than thirty membership organizations, funders, and advocates at the National Press Club. At the stakeholder briefing, participants talked about the “game-changing opportunities” of the assessments, and how the Consortium’s approach could be “transformative.”

Smarter Balanced used this opportunity to highlight key milestones toward the on-time launch of the assessment system in the 2014-15 school year, including:

- Smarter Balanced Governing States conducted a Pilot Test this spring--one of the largest tryouts of an assessment system in the United States.
- In 2013, Smarter Balanced will work with nearly 2,000 teachers to develop formative assessment and professional development resources.
- State higher education and K-12 leaders collaborated on a shared definition of college readiness to ensure that proficiency provides entry into entry-level, transferable, credit-bearing courses.

SUPPORTING CLASSROOM TEACHERS



Common Core Resources for Educators

Smarter Balanced is committed to supporting member states as they implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Working with educators, Smarter Balanced will identify high-quality curriculum resources aligned to the CCSS and professional development strategies that will be integrated into a digital library of formative assessment resources that will launch in fall 2014.

Many organizations have developed resources to explain the standards and help teachers support student success in the classroom. Smarter Balanced recently updated the [Common Core State Standards Tools and Resources](#)

- Shelbi Cole, Ph.D. - Director, Mathematics
- Nikki Elliott-Schuman - 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
- Brandt Redd - Chief Technology Officer

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

IN THE NEWS

- The *Statesman Journal* reported on the Oregon State Board of Education’s unanimous decision to switch from the Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS) to Smarter Balanced assessments.
- The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* described the transition in Missouri from the Missouri

[webpage](#) with links to factsheets, videos, and instructional resources that provide detailed information for educators, parents, and policymakers about the new standards.

The website includes links to:

- [Common Core Overview Videos by the Council of the Great City Schools](#)
- [Instructional resources for teachers from the AFT's Share My Lesson](#)
- [Teaching Channel videos on the Common Core](#)
- [Parent Roadmaps in English and Spanish from the Council of the Great City Schools](#)
- [Student Achievement Partners' resources for educators](#)

In the coming months, Smarter Balanced will continue to identify tools and resources for teachers to help all students meet the challenge of college- and career-ready standards.

PRACTICE TESTS NOW AVAILABLE



Teachers, parents, and students across the country can now access [Smarter Balanced Practice Tests](#) aligned to the Common Core State Standards. The Consortium recently released sets of example test

questions for grades 3–8 and 11 in both English language arts/literacy and mathematics. The Practice Tests will help schools prepare for the implementation of the Smarter Balanced Assessment System in the 2014-15 school year.

The Practice Tests provide a preview of the types of questions that will be featured in the summative assessment beginning in 2014-15, including selected-response items, constructed-response items, technology-enhanced items, and performance tasks—extended activities that challenge students to apply their knowledge and skills to respond to real-world problems.

The Practice Tests do not include all the features of the operational assessments. For example, students and teachers will not receive reports or scores from the Practice Tests. Although Smarter Balanced assessments will be computer adaptive, the Practice Tests follow a fixed-form model. By fall 2013, Smarter Balanced will make enhancements to the Practice Tests, including the addition of performance tasks in mathematics, new accommodations for students with disabilities, and scoring rubrics.

The release of the Practice Tests follows the Smarter Balanced Pilot Test, the first large-scale tryout of items and performance tasks, conducted February 20 – May 24, 2013. Development of the

Assessment Program test (MAP) to Smarter Balanced assessments.

- Thomaston (CT) Superintendent of Schools Lynda Mitchell expressed support for the Smarter Balanced assessments in the [Thomaston Express](#).
- [THE Journal](#) provided details about the launch of the Smarter Balanced Practice Test.
- [Education Week](#) covered the release of the Practice Test.
- California Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson encouraged teachers, students, and parents to try out the Smarter Balanced Practice Tests in the [Sierra Sun Times](#).

SMARTER BALANCED NAMES BRANDT REDD AS NEW CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER

Brandt Redd was named new Chief Technology Officer (CTO) of Smarter Balanced. He was most recently a senior technology officer for education programs at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, where he provided technical guidance for the Shared Learning Collaborative (SLC). As CTO, Redd will ensure that the Smarter Balanced Assessment System is supported by a robust technology infrastructure. Read more about Brandt Redd [here](#).

SMARTER BALANCED FEATURED IN FORDHAM INSTITUTE Q&A

Smarter Balanced participated in a Q&A published on the Thomas B. Fordham Institute's Common Core Watch blog. The interview provided an in-depth look at the progress toward developing next-generation assessments aligned to the Common Core, as well as information on cost, technology, and the future of the Consortium. Read the full article [here](#).

Smarter Balanced Assessment System will continue after the release of the Practice Tests and through summer 2014 in collaboration with member states and educators.

DEMAND STRONG FOR PRACTICE TESTS



Test questions aligned to the Common Core are one of the most commonly requested resources by teachers. From the response to the release of the Smarter Balanced Practice Tests, it is clear that educators and parents are interested in learning more about

the assessments. Indeed, more than 65,000 people visited the Smarter Balanced website in the first week after the Practice Tests were posted, nearly four times the traffic from the previous week.

The Practice Tests allow teachers, students, and parents to experience items that look and function like those that will appear on the summative assessment in the 2014-15 school year. Smarter Balanced states are reaching out to stakeholders with information about the Practice Tests.

- “The Practice Tests are another tool we are able to provide parents, teachers and students in the coming years as we transition to higher academic standards in mathematics and English language arts. – *Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna, Idaho State Department of Education, May 30, 2013*
- “These practice tests give teachers, students, and parents a glimpse into understanding the skills and abilities our children will need to do well on test day and in preparation for college and career. This marks another step forward in the effort to help schools prepare to replace outdated assessments with tests that gauge the kind of critical thinking and deeper learning that comes with a world-class education.” – *California Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson, California Department of Education, May 30, 2013*
- “The practice tests give schools and families an opportunity to become familiar with the new assessments. The Smarter Balanced assessments will help educators better determine students' progress toward gaining the knowledge and skills they need for college and a career.” – *Missouri Commissioner of Education Chris L. Nicastro, Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, May 30, 2013*

TECHNOLOGY READINESS CALCULATOR

A Technology Readiness Calculator is now available to help schools estimate the number of days and associated network bandwidth required to complete Smarter Balanced assessments. This tool allows districts and schools to enter the number of students, number of computers, and number of hours per day that computers are available for testing. The calculator is available through the [Technology page](#) of the Smarter Balanced website.

PILOT TEST OPERATING SYSTEM USAGE DATA

Smarter Balanced is beginning to receive information from the Pilot Test that concluded on May 24. The first report provides a breakdown of operating systems based on the Internet browsers used to connect to the Pilot Test. Across all tests that were begun, 81.29% of devices used Windows, 14.74% used OSX (Intel), 1.89% used iOS, 1.05% used Chrome OS, 0.78% used OSX (PPC), and 0.25% used Linux. Smarter Balanced will release additional information from the Pilot Test as it becomes available.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION

If states administer a paper-and-pencil version of the assessment, will scores be comparable with the computer adaptive test?

Smarter Balanced will make a paper-and-pencil version of the summative assessment available during a three-year transition period as schools and districts upgrade their technology. Smarter Balanced will conduct research and will perform equating studies to ensure that results are comparable across the two modes of assessment and to put the paper-and-pencil forms onto the scale used for the online testing.

To improve the precision of the paper-and-pencil version, Smarter Balanced may develop a short “locator” test that will help target an appropriate longer form of the assessment for individual students.

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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:

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