The Smarter Balanced Assessmeny Consortium
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Topics

- Caveats and Context
- Historical Setting
- Design
- Governance
- Accessiblity and Universal Design

Caveats and Context

Caveats and Context

- Smarter Balanced developed in a unique point in United States
- Developed in ways to address U.S. laws, demographics, culture, history, and economics
- Please consider these only as ideas for your consideration

A Unique Opportunity

- Prior to 2009, each state established different expectations about what kids should know and do in each grade
- Local Agencies (with boundaries similar to cities) established the scope and sequence of the learning
- Text books were written to meet the needs of big states like California, Texas, Florida and New York
- Educators in other states had to supplement the texts with additional resources

- In 2009 states collaborated to develop common standards for what kids should know and do
- By 2013, 45 of the 50 states had adopted the standards.
- The standards created a political reaction from some parents and policy makers who expressed concern about federalism and the loss of local control

- In 2010, the US Government released a competitive grant to build high quality assessments aligned to the new standard
- Smarter Balanced was one of two Consortia that were awarded a grant
- Smarter Balanced was unique in that it promoted adaptive tests and supports for students whose home language was not English

- The new assessment became a political target for the left (liberal) and right (conservative)
- Conservatives tended to be concerned about federal control
- Liberals tended to be concerned that the assessment would be used to stifle innovation and would be used to evaluate the performance of teachers

Design

Seven Key Principles

1. An integrated system
2. Evidence-based approach
3. Teacher involvement
4. State-led with transparent governance
5. Focus: improving teaching and learning
6. Actionable information – multiple measures
7. Established professional standards

A Balanced Assessment System

Common Core State Standards specify K-12 expectations for college and career readiness
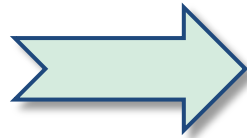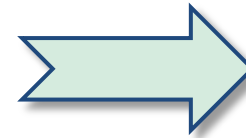
Summative assessments
Benchmarked to college and career readiness

Teachers and schools have information and tools they need to improve teaching and learning

Teacher resources for **formative assessment practices** to improve instruction

Interim assessments
Flexible, open, used for actionable feedback

All students leave high school college and career ready

A Balanced Assessment System

- Formative
  - Not a test, rather supports the processes that teachers use to change their instruction
  - Resources for teachers, some of which they can use during instruction with students
- Interim
  - 10 tests in each grade each about 10-15 items
  - Teachers can see the questions and their students' responses
  - Can use them interactively or as standardized and novel assessments
- Summative
  - Secure tests administered at the end of the year
  - Approximately 45 items
  - Designed to be computer based and Adaptive
  - 2 tests in each grade (Math and English)

Teacher Involvement

TEACHERS PARTICIPATE IN

- Test item development
- Test scoring
- Formative tool development
- Professional development cadres

TEACHERS BENEFIT FROM

- Professional development
- Formative tools and processes
- Data from summative and interim assessments

Item and Performance Task Development

Theory Of Action and Content Standards	Item Piloting	Large Scale Item Writing
Content Specifications	Initial Item Writing Alignment and Bias Review	Large Scale Alignment and Bias Review
Item and Test Specifications	Rapid Prototyping	Field Testing and Scaling
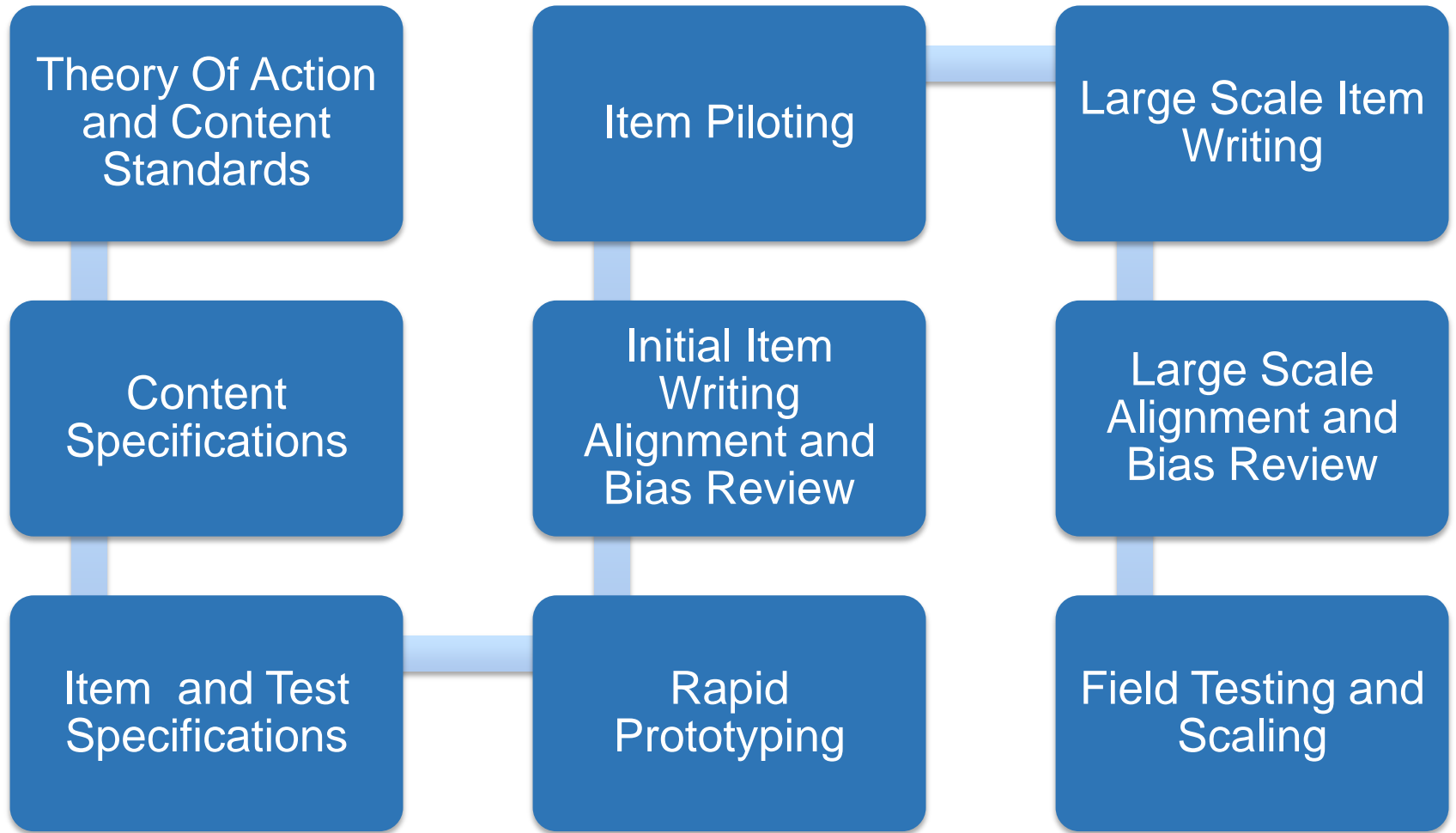
Value of SMARTER Balanced

Students
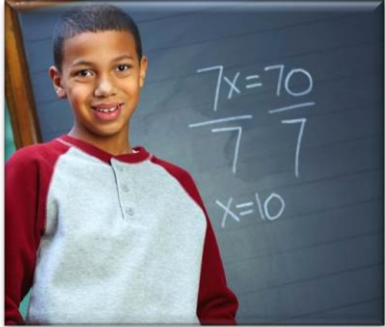
- I am challenged
- I know how I am progressing
- My test results will be accurate

Parents

- My child's class time is focused on learning and not on testing
- I will know whether my child's school is performing as well as it should

Teachers

- I won't be surprised by the test results at the end of the year
- I will have the supports I need to help my students
- The tests measures the right things in the right way

Policymakers

- We are sharing costs with other states to provide a world-class test
- We can compare the performance and growth of our schools, districts and state so that we can improve

Current Emphasis

- Cost and quality are strongest motivation. In 2013, the estimated cost of Smarter Balanced was less than what 2/3rds of states were paying. The quality of our tests were higher.
- Centralized only essential elements
- Design, item development and field testing are managed centrally
- Scoring and test administration is designed centrally, but managed and implemented locally
- Specific tests for specific purpose
- More flexibility is allowed, but limits comparability and increases costs

Fixed Versus Variable Costs

- Fixed Costs (generally)
  - Staffing for Communications, Item Development, Design, Analysis and Reporting
  - Assessment Design, Analysis and Electronic Reporting
  - Item Design (research, evaluation, training materials development)
  - Machine Scoring
- Variable Costs
  - Hand Scoring
  - Help Desk Services
  - Printing, Scanning and Shipping of paper materials (tests, manuals and reports)

Governance and timeline

Consortium Designed by States for States

- Consensus-based approach decision making. Allows small and large states to benefit
- System architecture being built with options for state procurement in mind
- Create as many options for states as possible while still retaining economies of scale

State Involvement in Getting the Work Done: Consortium Work Groups

Work group engagement of 90 state-level staff:

Each work group:
- Led by co-chairs from governing states
- 6 or more members from advisory or governing states
- 1 liaison from the Executive Committee
- 1 WestEd partner

Work group responsibilities:

- Define scope and time line for work in its area
- Develop a work plan and resource requirements
- Determine and monitor the allocated budget
- Oversee Consortium work in its area, including identification and direction of vendors

1. Accessibility and Accommodations
2. Formative Assessment Practices and Professional Learning
3. Item Development
4. Performance Tasks
5. Reporting
6. Technology Approach
7. Test Administration
8. Test Design
9. Transition to Common Core State Standards
10. Validation and Psychometrics

Timeline

| Master Plan Developed and Work Groups Launched | Formative Processes, Tools, and Practices Development Begins | Item Writing and Review Activities Completed (Summative and Interim) | Field Testing of Summative Assessment Administered | Final Achievement Standards (Summative) Verified and Adopted |

| **2010–2011 School Year** | **2011–2012 School Year** | **2012–2013 School Year** | **2013–2014 School Year** | **2014–2015 School Year** |

| Common Core Translation and Item Specifications Completed | Common Core State Standards Adopted by All States | Pilot Testing of Summative and Interim Assessments Conducted | Preliminary Achievement Standards (Summative) Proposed and Other Policy Definitions Adopted | Operational Summative Assessment Administered |

Logistics

- Each state has a lead that represents issues for Elementary, Middle and High School and another that represents universities
- The leads act as ambassadors to the state policy makers and address detailed issues
- Two times a month phone calls that describe progress and vet solutions to problems
- 2 times a year there are in-person meetings to address more controversial topics and to share ideas
- There's an executive committee elected by the states that provide oversight and guidance to the staff and approve expenditures

Current Governance

- Currently serve 12 states and the territory of the Virgin Islands
- Housed as a program within the University of California
- Support 40 Full Time Staff with additional resources from the University supporting fiscal (e.g. billing and payments) and human resources (e.g. hiring staff, benefits, etc)

Staff: Communications and Public Affairs

- Create materials that help inform state policy makers
- Create materials that states can provide directly to policy makers, school administrators, teachers, parents and students
- Create materials that states can customize for their needs and their specific audience
- Monitor state and federal legislation
- Manage the various web-sites the Consortium uses for different audiences and purposes
- Communicate to states if there are potential breeches of test security

Staff: Content

- Work with national experts, university faculty and teachers in schools to determine how to best measure the content
- Manage the ongoing development of items and the review of items for quality
- Mange the development of scoring rubrics and documentation about scoring so that states can consistently score the tests
- Manage the development of teacher resources included in the formative system as well as the web-application in which the resources are stored

Staff: Accessibility

- Work with national experts, university faculty and teachers in schools to determine how to best measure the content in a manner that isn't influenced by factors other than knowledge (e.g. home language and disabilities)

- Manage the ongoing development of items and the review of items to minimize bias

- Manage the development of resources that support the validity of items (e.g. translations of math items, Braille versions of the test for students who are blind)

- Manage the development of teacher resources that help educators choose the right resources for their students

Staff: Technology

- Identify the formats that the Consortium will use for different types of data (e.g which data is required versus optional, field names, length of characters allowed)

- Manage the web applications and servers that the Consortium uses

- Assist states in addressing technology problems that may be interfering with the assessment

- Consult for other staff regarding technology problems

Sustaining Governance

- Built the system to support changes
  - Local staff turnover
  - Consortium staff turnover
  - Policy makers and applicable laws
- Published a governance document at https://www.smarterbalanced.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Smarter-Balanced-Governance.pdf
- Involved local educators in the governance process
- Small states have an equal voice, but membership fees based on size

States' Role

- Pay the membership fees that support the Consortium
- Approve budgets
- Vote on policies
- Elect the Executive Committee
- Train Districts staff who then train school staff on how to administer and use the assessment
- Hire a vendor to administer and score the test as well as provide help desk services
- Deliver data to the Consoritum

Accessibility (Universal Design)

- Each state in the Consortium had a statewide already in place
- Most of the assessments were limited by development costs and ongoing maintenance costs that they could afford
- Common Core allowed us to revisit what should be measured and what resources are appropriate for students

- Evidence centered design approach supported a deliberative process to review each construct's attribute and the research based resources that available to support students

- Smarter Balanced created multi-disciplinary panels (e.g. ELL, SWD, Instruction, Content, Measurement) to consider perspectives from across the different fields

- Used the guidance from the experts to pilot the conceptual work with iterative cognitive labs that emphasized the inclusion of diverse student populations

Sustaining the System and Local Implementation

- The training materials used at the Consortium level are available for use at the local level to better support teachers' understanding of the system and to support the use of those processes at the local level
- Ongoing structured planning at the local level is supported by the Individual Student Assessment Accessibility Profile which provides a process and a tool for adults to plan and document the resources individual students should be available during the assessment
- Ongoing support for training and implementation is critical