

Smarter Balanced Assessment Team

For more information or to be added to the newsletter distribution list, please contact:

Linda Moreno
Assessment Coordinator for Special Populations
802-479-1309

Linda.moreno@vermont.gov



From the Test Director:

Late last week, a rather disturbing email appeared in the Agency's inbox from a student who clearly did not have a good experience with Smarter Balanced testing. I'm not bringing this up to dispute the student's complaints – it's not actually clear what the issues were – but rather, to suggest that there could have been a "teachable moment" in a situation like this, an opportunity to teach students some of the rules and best practices of civic engagement. Here are a few examples from my little testing world of how discontent, expressed in a productive manner, can lead to change:

- During the first year we administered the NECAP high school exam, an English teacher heard her students grumbling about how the test was unfair. She suggested that they should write me a letter and helped them by making it a class activity. Without really knowing that there is such a thing as "item bias", they picked up on something the experts had missed. The writing prompt that year was something about how cell phones are changing our culture, and the students' concern was that there is no cell service where they live. Because of their letter, our bias and sensitivity item reviews now stress the fact that regional bias is a 'thing' and we don't want our test questions to have it.
- Secretary Holcombe received a letter from a fifth grader that made a very reasoned case that testing was not a good use of students' time. However, what could be read between the lines is that no one had actually told the student why she was being asked to take the test. The Secretary wrote back, explaining how student test scores can provide teachers and principals with information that can help them make a better school. Then she collaborated with me on a short paper called "Why We Test" that we hope will help schools explain testing to parents and students. You can find it in the "[SBAC Tools for School Leaders](#)" folder on the Vermont portal, along with a sample parent letter and other "public facing" documents.

There are many other examples I could provide: the high school journalism class that did an investigative report on testing, the college math class that developed a parent friendly guide on test statistics, the group of high school students who

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Questions?

Please contact:

Help Desk (AIR) for Test Administration & Test Delivery Technologies
vthelpdesk@air.org
844-218-1184

Michael Hock (AOE) for Policies and Procedures
Michael.hock@vermont.gov
802-479-1288

Linda Moreno
Accessibility and Accommodations for Special Populations
Linda.moreno@vermont.gov
802-479-1309

called to tell me how much they disliked testing and ended up volunteering to meet with younger students to tell them that despite the fact that testing is a pain, if you're proud of your school, you need to do your best. The lesson in all of this is that anger and discontent can be transformed into a force for change, but an obscenity laced e-mail will probably only land you in detention. By the way, although this message is about what students should do if they don't like testing, we sure would like to hear from them if they think it is okay.

Michael Hock, State Assessment Director

From our Inbox:

To: Michael Hock

From: A Group of Teachers

Re: SBAC Scores

How is the SBAC scored for wrong answers? Do kids lose a percentage of their score for wrong answers? Or is their score just about how many correct answers they can accumulate? I realize that kids will all get different questions (with the exception of the performance task). Will all kids face the same number of questions? I'm cc'ing Elizabeth and Betty because they might know the answers at least in terms of the math.

Response: First of all, let me assure you that there are no guessing penalties in the SBAC scoring system. However, unlike our prior assessments, the student score is not derived from the percent of items a student gets correct out of a fixed set of questions. In brief, here is how scoring works:

- The student's first question is selected randomly from a large pool of questions that represent all the content within a skill area across the full range of difficulty for that content area and grade level.
- If the student gets that question right, the computer program delivers a slightly harder question, and if the student gets it wrong a slightly easier item is delivered. At the same time, the program predicts the student's proficiency level within a very broad band of confidence.
- This process is repeated until the confidence band is as small as possible.
- The number of items this takes will differ from student to student. Thus, the student's score depends on the point on the scale that best predicts the student's performance. The actual percent correct does not enter into these calculations. In other words, it's the difficulty of the items the student gets right (not the number of items) that determines the score.

I hope this makes sense to everyone. It's a very different way to think about scoring, and one that can only be done with a computer algorithm (unless you happen to be a complete Brainiac).

From the Director's in-box





From the Archives – Closing the Test Window

Editor’s Note: We want to remind you that before you officially close your testing window, there are a few steps you should take to make sure that all your students actually completed all the necessary sections of the assessment.

From the 6/5/15 Edition of the Newsletter

Please verify that all your students have completed testing. Test coordinators who have completed this process have discovered students whom they thought had finished, actually had one more section of the test to complete. In a few cases, the students had in fact finished, but left their tests on pause rather than hitting the "submit" button. I'm pleased to report that thus far, to the best of my knowledge, we have not lost any student work because of technological issues. Let's make sure we finish the window with all students "present and accounted for." We've reprinted the verification process on [page 2](#) of this newsletter.

Digital Library: Calling ALL State Network Educators (SNEs)

As of 4/3/16, there were 46 resources in the “Review Queue” and four resources in the “Arbitration Queue”. Please set a goal to take about 30 minutes this month to review one resource.

Also, we are hoping to move forward with an SNE workshop in July. I will have more information by the next newsletter. If you are not an SNE, and would like to become one, please check-out the training materials in the VT-SBAC portal under [Digital Library](#). You may also contact Linda Moreno or your state content specialist for more details. We need *all subject* areas.

Question of the Week

Do we include all ELL students, including released and monitored, in the LEP field in TIDE? No. The only students included in the LEP field will be those actively receiving ESOL services.

Do we need to check off languages? No. Languages are not reported. *Only fields with an asterisk need to be completed.*

Testing Progress: Completion Tally

2016 SBAC Assessment Tally – Vermont: Week 5					
Total # of Students Registered:	Completed the CAT Summative Assessments		Completed the Performance Tasks		Total # of Tests Completed to Date:
44,890					67,054 (37.3%)
Grade / #	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	All
11: 8,891	4,254	4,356	3,938	4,168	16,716
8: 6,024	2,707	2,187	2,615	2,178	9,687
7: 5,928	2,588	2,039	2,491	2,067	9,185
6: 6,010	2,313	1,816	2,292	1,763	8,184
5: 5,970	1,919	1,768	1,918	1,684	7,289
4: 5,908	2,539	2,085	2,453	1,984	9,061
3: 6,159	2,059	1,490	1,935	1,448	6,932

