

Smarter Balanced Assessment Team

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From the Test Director

By most accounts, our first administration of the Smarter Balanced tests last spring went quite well. However, I must admit that I was disappointed that we could not benefit for the quick turn-around of test results that is possible with the computer delivery system. I'm very pleased to report that this year we will be instituting "expedited reporting," which means that after a student submits a completed test (e.g., both the Computer Adaptive and Performance Task sections) scores will be available for the student in two weeks or less via the Online Reporting System (ORS). Also, as results become available for other students it will be possible to begin using the ORS group analysis tools.

Why, you might ask, was this service not available last year? First of all, we wanted to take a cautious approach to reporting to ensure that all systems were working correctly, including scoring procedures, prior to releasing results. However, a greater concern was related to how expedited reporting might have a negative impact on the flexible scheduling that is possible with a three-month testing window; if schools that test early in the assessment window report results to the public as soon as they are available, other schools might feel pressured to test early so that they might also report early.

Recently we put the following proposal out to a number of educational leadership groups in the form of a survey:

PROPOSED: For the 2016 assessment window the Agency will activate Expedited Reporting for internal use by schools, with the caveat that schools will prohibit all staff from public reporting until the Agency releases schools' results following confirmation of enrollment and demographic data through the annual Spring Census. The Agency will post a common release date as soon as it is practicable. Supervisory Unions or Supervisory Districts that share data publically prior to the Agency's release date, regardless of method or intentionality, will lose access to expedited reporting in the subsequent year.

The response we received was overwhelmingly in favor of the proposal, with all the respondents assuring us that our schools could be trusted to maintain the embargo on public reporting. Specifically, here is what this means:

**Smarter Balanced
Spring Testing Window****March 15, 2016 –
May 27, 2016****Make-up Days****May 31, 2016 to
End of Year**

- individual student results will be reported to the ORS within a few weeks of submitting a completed test, either ELA or Math;
- group results will be available as soon as more than one student submits a completed test;
- these results are available for internal use by schools **but should not be reported to parents or the community**;
- a public reporting **embargo** will be in place until a specific date to be announced by the Agency of Education, but not until all schools have completed testing.

More on this topic in a future edition of the newsletter.

Michael Hock, State Assessment Director

Pencil and Paper testing:

Any school leaders who believe they can make the case for administering the Smarter Balanced assessments in a pencil and paper format should apply to the Agency for permission by March 4, 2016. Requests can be submitted by e-mail to Michael Hock (michael.hock@vermont.gov) and should state why the pencil and paper format is best for the school. Please note that the Agency's policy on pencil and paper tests is that they should only be used if the school lacks sufficient technological infrastructure to deliver the digital version of the assessment. Last year only one school in the state accessed the pencil and paper option and we are not expecting that to change this year.

Technology Issues

From time to time you may hear that a particular computer operating system or browser "does not work" with the Smarter Balanced assessment. Typically what that means is that some part of the Smarter Balanced Test Delivery System, often one of the embedded accessibility tools, is not working as intended, but overall the system does work. Earlier this year we heard that there were problems with the latest Apple operating system. Those issues have been fully resolved and schools can continue to use Macs and iPads to administer the assessment. More recently, some issues were identified with the quality of text-to-speech available with the Chrome 47 secure browser. Our contractor, American Institutes for Research, has been working with Google to resolve this problem in Chrome 48, and should have the new browsers available for download within the next week or two, but certainly in time for the assessment window that opens on March 15. We'll let you know as soon as the download is available but you may also check the VT Assessment Portal periodically.

**Teacher Certification
Course**

Vermont Smarter Balanced Assessment Exemption Form

Updated [Health Exemption forms](#) are available on the [VT-SBAC portal](#). You can click your way by going into the Test Administration Card, clicking on Special Populations, and opening the Test Administration folder. Or, you can click on the Test Administration Card and use the search function in the upper left section of the folder menu. This year, the state will be tracking exemptions for all state mandated tests: Smarter Balanced, DLM, NECAP Science, VTAAP and ACCESS 2.0. It is very important that all students/schools get credit for participation as this is going to be emphasized under ESSA. The protocol will remain the same as the 2014-15 school year.

Text-to-Speech (TTS)/Read Aloud Accommodation Request Form (3-5)

(reprint)

TTS Accommodation (ELA–CAT passages) will be available for grades 3-5 this year. The protocol is the same as last year in that you will need to get state approval for this accommodation. Both the TTS grades 3-5 and the TTS 6-8, 11 will need to be entered by the District Assessment Coordinator (DA); however, middle school and high school students do not need state approval. We are asking DAs to please not enter this accommodation for students unless you have an approval form on file from the state for students in grades 3-5. The [TTS Accommodation Request Form](#) also covers the non-embedded Read Aloud accommodation. TTS as a designated support is available for all students who demonstrate a need.

[TTS/Read Aloud Guidelines](#) can also be found on the VT-SBAC portal under the Special Populations card in the Supporting Documents and Training folder. This document offers guidelines for evaluating the need for TTS and includes a checklist for teachers to use in their evaluation. Districts may wish to keep this on file with the TTS Request Form.

Digital Library (DL)& Formative Assessment

Teachers and State Leads in the content areas just got back from a workshop in Oregon. We worked on review & submission of new lessons, tagging keywords that link interim assessments to related lessons, annotating Resources, and playlists in the search tool. The focus of the DL is to highlight research-based best practices in teaching and formative assessments. VT has added a DL card to the VT-SBAC Portal. The card contains access to the DL, a list of all the DL District Coordinators for your SU/SD, and the link for the online training to become a member of the State Network of Educators (SNEs) which will enable you to submit materials to the library and opportunities for professional development. If you have any questions about the DL, please feel free to contact Linda Moreno in Assessments or your Content Specialists. We are currently looking for Science, Social Studies, Special Education, and English Language Learner (ELL) lessons in addition to the ELA and MA lessons.

