

## 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](mailto:Linda.Moreno@vermont.gov)

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Questions?

Please contact:

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

Michael Hock (AOE) for  
Policies and Procedures  
[Michael.Hock@vermont.gov](mailto:Michael.Hock@vermont.gov)  
802-479-1288

Linda Moreno for  
Accessibility and  
Accommodations  
[Linda.Moreno@vermont.gov](mailto:Linda.Moreno@vermont.gov)  
802-479-1309

Gabriel McGann for  
Science & PE Assessments,  
Exemptions & Appeals  
[Gabriel.McGann@vermont.gov](mailto:Gabriel.McGann@vermont.gov)  
802-479-1444



## Message from the Director: Assessment System Updates for 2017-2018

### PLEASE REGISTER

Last time I checked only a few of our school districts were registered to attend the Regional Assessment Workshops that are scheduled for the first week of February in four locations around the state (see below). The agenda for these meetings is packed with important information about changes and improvements to the Smarter Balanced Assessments, as well as an introduction to the new NGSS-aligned assessment that is scheduled to be field-tested in May. Districts may bring up to three individuals to a workshop, but please, please send at least one. If you can send a team, please consider making one member someone with an orientation to science.

February 6, 2018: [Montpelier](#)

February 7, 2018: [Mt Snow](#)

February 8, 2018: [Killington](#)

February 9, 2018: [Burlington](#)

I want to acknowledge that the low workshop registration count may be due to the fact that we haven't published an assessment newsletter for several months. For this, we send our sincerest apologies. Since the September newsletter went out, the assessment team has been working frantically on getting the science assessment contract signed, planning for a new alternate assessment, helping with the planning of a new physical education assessment, completing a federal peer review submission, all in addition to a typical daily schedule that is always packed. The assessment team has also taken the time to add three new babies to Vermont's population, doing our part to help stem the tide of declining student enrollment, and after two surgeries, one of us got a brand new knee. This is not intended as an excuse, but more a reason, for our limited communication with the field. We apologize and promise to go back to publishing the newsletter on a regular schedule.

Here's to a happy and productive 2018 with much joy and high test scores. See you at the regional workshops.

(Continued)

**Important Links:**

[Agency Statement on Test Participation and Parent Opt Out](#) (Revised)

[Health Exemption Form](#) (Revised)

[Understanding Dual Reporting](#)

**From the Newsletter Archive:**

[Expedited Reporting/ Reporting Embargo](#)

[Dual Reporting for CTEs and Independent Schools](#)

[Opening the Testing Window Checklist](#)

**Michael Hock, State Assessment Director**

Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Program (VTCAP)		
Test Dates		
Assessment	Start	End
Smarter Balanced	March 13, 2018	June 1, 2018 Individual Student Make-up 6/1- End of Year
Vermont Science Assessment (VTSA)	May 14, 2018	June 1, 2018
Alternate ELA/MA/Science	TBD	TBD
Vermont Physical Education Assessments (VPEA)	May 1, 2018	May 31, 2018
ACCESS 2.0	January 16, 2018	March 9, 2018



**District Administrator (DA) 2018 Update**

The VT AOE is in the process of updating our roster of district test administrators. If you did not get an email requesting this information please contact Gabe McGann at [gabriel.mcgann@vermont.gov](mailto:gabriel.mcgann@vermont.gov) or 802-479-1444. **Note:** Independent Schools should also send an Assessment Contact to ensure timely correspondence.

**NGSS-Aligned Science Assessment**

As a part of implementing the Vermont State Plan and more accurately measuring students' science proficiency, Vermont is in the process of developing a new NGSS-aligned statewide science assessment. This assessment will replace the NECAP Science assessment and will be field-tested in May 2018. For additional information about the assessment, and its role in Vermont's accountability system, [read the full memo on New Next Generation Science Standards-Aligned Assessment](#). For questions about science content standards and instructional practice, email Margaret Carrera-Bly, at [margaret.carrera-bly@vermont.gov](mailto:margaret.carrera-bly@vermont.gov), for questions about assessment development and administration, contact Gabriel McGann at [gabriel.mcgann@vermont.gov](mailto:gabriel.mcgann@vermont.gov), and Accessibility and Accommodations and the NGSS Alternate Assessment, contact Linda Moreno at [linda.moreno@vermont.gov](mailto:linda.moreno@vermont.gov).

## New Physical Education Assessment

As Vermont works to implement an accountability system that better reflects the state's education priorities, as stated in Education Quality Standards, changes will need to be made at the state and local level. One such change is the implementation of physical education assessments. Read the full [Physical Education Assessment memo](#). The AOE selected FitnessGram to serve as its statewide physical education assessment for state and federal accountability purposes. FitnessGram is a non-competitive fitness assessment and is currently the most widely used fitness assessment tool nationally. The state will also be implementing the Brockport Physical Fitness Test as a companion test, and will determine an alternate after the pilot administration. The physical education assessments will be piloted statewide in May 2018. It will be formally incorporated into the state's accountability system beginning in 2018-2019. To learn more, please read the [FAQ for Physical Education Assessment](#).

### PE Training

Physical Education is now used in the state accountability matrix and therefore every student must assess. In order to administer the assessment, educators must be trained. We are employing the "Train the Trainer" model and therefore, folks sent to represent the district must be available to train other educators and independent school staff if need be. More information on the Brockport Companion and alternate assessment is forthcoming.

The next PE Assessment training will be held on February 21<sup>st</sup> (22<sup>nd</sup> snow date) at Castleton State University. For districts that have not had an opportunity to join us for any of the previous trainings, please join us on February 21<sup>st</sup> to go over the administration of this new and innovative statewide assessment. We would love each SU/SD to send four participants: the District Administrator, 2 Physical Education Representatives, and 1 Special Education representative. Sign up using this [survey link](#).

For questions about Physical Education Content standards and Instructional Practice, please contact Susan Yesalonia, Physical Education Coordinator, at [Susan.Yesalonia@vermont.gov](mailto:Susan.Yesalonia@vermont.gov), for assessment development and administration, contact Gabriel McGann, Statewide Assessment Coordinator,

### Fall 2017 Webinar Series

If you didn't get a chance to call into one of the fall 2017 webinars, you can find them in the Teacher Training Materials on the [VTCAP portal](#). They are the Overview of AIR Enhancements and Technology Requirements for Online Testing. Both can be found on the portal.

**VTCAP Portal > Test Administration > [Webinars](#)**

## Interims

### Keys

If you are taking advantage of the interim assessments, you will be happy to find out that we have posted the answer keys in TIDE.



You can find them on the landing page as soon as you log into TIDE. The keys will be in your mailbox. The keys address both the Interim Comprehensive Assessments (ICAs) and the Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs).

## Digital Library Connections Playlists

If you haven't visited the Digital Library (DL) lately, you should. For the better part of last year, and over the summer, educators from across the consortium, including many from Vermont, have been working hard to re-tag and clean up the DL resources. In total, 268 specific gaps have been identified. While it's unlikely that we will be able to create all 268 new resources at the upcoming workshop in Sacramento, we will be working toward that goal. This will make your searches more efficient and faster. Smarter Balanced also gave educators the ability to customize and favorite his or her resources. There has been much work around creating the [Connections Playlists](#), and as of today, there are 34 ELA, 35 MA, and 5 Professional Development playlists and counting. These playlists will have the capability to connect to your Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs), thus creating a "next steps" document designed to help you make use of your classroom data.

## **Educator Opportunities ALL CALL – Names due in one week.**

Smarter Balanced is beginning a new system of recruiting educators for test development opportunities. Starting in 2018, Smarter is doing an "All Call" to develop a list of educators interested in participating in assessment development for the 2018 *calendar* year. From that pool of educators and depending on the type of work, Smarter will select educators to participate. Prior to contacting the teacher, we will get a list of names and will need to approve or disapprove the recommendation. Although I do not anticipate the latter, the agency will need an application from the teacher for our file here at the AOE or your name will not be approved. You can find more information in the [Educator Opportunity Card](#) of the VTCAP Portal. If your application is already on file at the AOE, you will not need to complete another application unless your grade, position, credentials and/or work location have changed. However, the survey applications sent by Smarter Balanced will need to be completed annually. It should also be noted that there would be additional opportunities for assessment work on the NGSS Science and alternate assessments as well. If you have any questions, please contact Linda Moreno at [linda.moreno@vermont.gov](mailto:linda.moreno@vermont.gov) or 802-479-1309.



### From the Inbox

From a Curriculum Coordinator

Re: New ninth grade test

Michael,

My teachers are wondering what courses students will need to take to be ready for the new grade 9 SBAC. How are you going to determine which students are proficient?

Response:

You are not the first to ask this question. Unfortunately, the answer is not simple because, as you probably know, the high school Common Core State Standards for High School do not designate a specific grade-by-grade course sequence nor are specific standards designated for each grade. As far as how proficiency will be determined, AIR, our assessment contractor, has interpolated proposed achievement level cut scores by linking the current grade 11 cuts to the grade 8 cuts and divided them into thirds. The proficient cut score for grade 9 will be placed at the first third. In November, we will bring together educators and curriculum experts to validate the proposed cuts and tweak them as needed. I've been pondering how we can make this meaningful to educators (expect a paper some time in the next few months) but to my way of thinking, this should not drive curriculum or course sequence, but rather, to help confirm at grade 9 if students are progressing adequately toward the level of readiness we hope they will have just prior to graduating. I hope that makes some sense. This an explanation that is still under construction in my brain. Consider this a first attempt and expect something more definitive as we move into the school year.

Michael Hock, State Assessment Director

### Question of the Week?

By now, there are several questions regarding the 9<sup>th</sup> grade Smarter Balanced Assessment. Rather than select and answer only one, we thought we would take this week's question slot and introduce you to the new Smarter Balanced [Grade 9 Assessment FAQ](#). If you have a question not addressed in the FAQ, please feel free to contact any member of the assessment team.



### Text-to-Speech (TTS) Accommodation Request

Just a reminder that we will be following the same TTS Request protocol as 2017. All requests must go through the District Test Coordinator and be approved by the state. The 2017 [Text to Speech/Read Aloud Accommodation Training for Grades 3-5 ELA CAT](#) is still posted on the VTCAP portal in the Special Populations section. You can also download the TTS Guidelines and Request Forms from the portal.

## Smarter Balanced Accessibility: New Features

### [Braille Options](#)

Smarter Balanced is pleased to announce a new braille Hybrid Adaptive Test (HAT). The new format will allow for an online segment that will be adaptive and contain items that have no graphics, and a fixed form segment that will have graphics, but come with a pre-embossed graphic supplement. Also new are braille transcripts. A braille transcript of the closed captioning created for listening passages is available in EBAE uncontracted and EBAE contracted. A [Braille Options for 2017-28](#) document has been created to assist our Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs). A complete list of options for students who assess using braille is available on the [VT-SBAC portal](#) in the Special Populations resources.

### [Accessibility Changes](#)

A 2017 and 2018 Accessibility Update and Comparison Chart has been posted to the VTCAP portal. This chart features newly accepted universal tools, designated supports and accommodations for this year's assessment.

### [Guidelines FAQ](#)

If you have questions and are having trouble finding the answer in one of the manuals, Smarter Balanced keeps an updated Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on their website. Please take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with some of the most commonly asked questions regarding accessibility and accommodations.

## **Finally, VTCAP Newsletter Honorable Mention: New Content Specialists**

PBL English Language Arts Coordinator

Sarah Birgé [sarah.birge@vermont.gov](mailto:sarah.birge@vermont.gov) or 802-479-1364

PBL Math Coordinator

Heidi Whipple [heidi.whipple@vermont.gov](mailto:heidi.whipple@vermont.gov) or 802-479-1379

PBL STEM Coordinator

Greg Young [gregory.young@vermont.gov](mailto:gregory.young@vermont.gov) or 802-479-1448

PBL PBL ML/HS Science Coordinator

Margaret Carrera-Bly [Margaret.carrer-bly@vermont.gov](mailto:Margaret.carrer-bly@vermont.gov) or 802-479-1097

Physical Education

Susan Yesalonia [susan.yesalonia@vermont.gov](mailto:susan.yesalonia@vermont.gov) or 802-479-1284