

## Smarter Balanced Assessment Team

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

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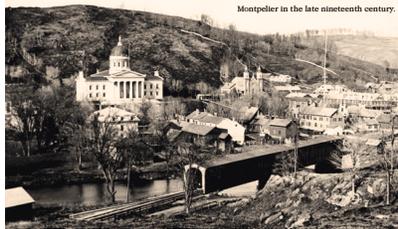
### Questions?

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## From the Test Director: Assessing in High School (Clarification)

In the last edition of the Newsletter, I tried to clarify when high school students should take the Smarter Balanced test and apparently created more confusion than clarity. I apologize. Please allow me to try again. When I wrote that “every student needs to be tested once in high school,” I was simply quoting the federal law. I was not suggesting, as some of you thought, that schools could choose any grade – 10, 11 or 12 – that was most convenient for the school or the student. For the vast majority of students, the tests will be administered during their junior year. In cases when a student starts a year as a sophomore and then gets enough credits to be considered a junior later in the school year, we will go by what will be reported in your spring census. If you will list the student as a junior, the student should take the test. In those rare occasions when a student is listed as a sophomore in the spring census, and then through a variety of local options, ends up listed as a senior in the next year’s census, the student will be tested during his or her senior year. This probably doesn’t cover all the unique promotion strategies used in our high schools, so whenever in doubt, please call me.

**Michael Hock, State Assessment Director**

## The Big Idea

The Smarter Balanced Assessments use some of the most advanced and innovative assessment technologies that are currently available. We often receive questions about how the technology works and if there are ways to make it work better for students. Here is the big idea for this issue:

*About that 3-month test window – would students get better scores if they are tested at the very end since they will have about 3 more months of instruction than students who are tested in the beginning?*

Not likely. In fact, after two full administrations of the test we have seen no evidence of a connection between student scores and when they were tested. To understand why this is the case, there are three things that need to be considered. First of all, these are survey tests, meaning that a relatively small set of test questions are used to represent an entire school year’s instructional sequence. Second, those questions are not equally weighted in terms of difficulty, meaning that a question from earlier in the instructional sequence might be harder than one from the end. Finally, each test is made up of several sub content sequences – think

(continued)



of math covering arithmetic, geometry and algebra- each with its own array of hard and easy questions. This means that answering a difficult question from the mid-point of the sequence will have greater weight than an easy question from late in the year, or advanced skills in algebra may compensate for mediocre performance in geometry. The computer adaptive algorithm is designed to take all these factors into consideration when it zeroes in on a student's overall position on the proficiency scale. So, feel free to schedule your testing when it fits best on your local calendar and don't worry about it having a negative effect on your student's scores. It won't.

*Michael Hock, Director of State Assessments*

### From the Inbox

**From:** A Home-Schooling Parent

**To:** Hock, Michael

**Subject:** Question re: State Assessments

*I am the parent of a home schooled student currently in the fourth grade. Am I able to register him for any standardized assessments that compare other fourth graders to state and national standards? I have seen that some schools are offering the NAEP, but I have not received any information about standardized testing available for home schoolers. I understand deadlines to register and testing sites are complicated details. I also understand that reading and math are the target areas. My son has no special needs or accommodations. I am just seeking information. I look forward to hearing from you at your convenience.*



Response: Home schooled students are always welcome to take our statewide assessments at no charge to you. During the last 3 months of the school year we administer the Smarter Balanced Assessment (English Language Arts and Mathematics) at grades 3-8 and Grade 11 and the NECAP Science Test at grades 4, 8 and 11. Your home schooler would take the tests at the school he or she would attend (if not being home schooled) at the same time and location that it is being administered to the public school students. You will receive a report of how well your child achieved relative to state standards, including comparisons at the school, district and state levels, but the scores would not be included in the public school's reporting. I encourage you to contact the public school principal to find out the testing schedule and to make arrangements to have your student participate. Please let me know if you have any difficulty making those arrangements. As far as the NAEP assessment, it only produces state level results. There are no reports for individual students or the schools they attend.

**Note to District Administrators:** To set up testing so the home-schooler can participate, you will need to enter the student's information in TIDE. However, after testing is over and you have printed out a report for the parent, you will need to remove the student from TIDE so that the student's scores won't be included in school and district reporting. We will remove any students who are listed as home schooled in the spring census before we create state level reports and make accountability determinations. *Michael Hock*



**From the Inbox**

From: A Principal  
 To: Hock, Michael  
 Subject: Can Paras be Test Administrators

*Quick question. Is there some information about para educators being test administrators and needing to obtain the Test Administrator Certificate? Thanks.*

Response: We don't have a specific policy on para's (para-professionals) as test administrators, although we do offer this advice:

- If you use a para it should be someone who understands the "rules" on appropriate engagement with students during testing, confidentiality, test security, etc. With respect to student engagement, we've had some problems with special education paras who did not understand that the help and support they give students during regular classroom instruction and assessment may not be appropriate for the state assessments
- If you plan to use the para as the lead test administrator - that is, the person who operates the test delivery technology, starts and ends a test session, etc. - then the person will need a TA password and will need to complete the online testing certification tutorial. If they are simply going to support students during testing but not interact with the technology, then certification is not required.
- We actually think it's a good idea to train and certify a highly competent para as a TA. This will provide you with someone who can fill in if one of your teachers absent on a day scheduled for testing. *Michael Hock*

**TTS – Checklist & Accommodation 3-5 Protocol**

The new VT (state specific) guidance for assigning Text-to-Speech on the ELA CAT [[TTS Accommodation in grades 3-5](#)] is available in the [VT-SBAC Portal](#). Although the form allows you to enter information directly in the document, at present, you will still need to fax the request to Linda Moreno at 802-479-1829, unless otherwise directed by your DA. For your convenience, I have scheduled several [webinars](#) starting in January and running up to the start of the testing window. Please click on the embedded link above or the registration button to the left, to sign up. It is important that you try to attend at least one of the webinars and take advantage of the built-in Question & Answer session.

**TTS**  
 Accommodation  
[Webinar](#)  
[Registration](#)

**VT - TTS**  
 (3-5)  
 Accommodation  
 Qualification  
[Checklist](#)

Date	Time
Thursday, 1/19/17	10 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Thursday, 1/19/17	3:00 p.m. 4:00 p.m.
Monday, 1/23/17	12:00 p.m.- 1:00 p.m.
Thursday, 2/2/17	9:30 a.m.- 10:30 a.m.
Thursday, 2/2/17	2:00 p.m.- 3:00 p.m.
Monday, 2/13/17	3:30 p.m.- 4:30 p.m.
Friday, 2/24/17	11:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.
Tuesday, 2/28/17	9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
Wednesday, 3/8/17	3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Thursday, 3/9/17	3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Friday, 3/10/17	10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Monday, 3/13/17	3:00 p.m.- 4:00 p.m.

All special educators, classroom teachers, special education coordinators and district test administrators are encouraged to participate in any of these webinars. As we move to a more secure method of transmitting student information, it will be necessary for the TTS (3-5 ELA CAT) requests to be submitted by the District Administrator (DA). Therefore, a new protocol will need to be followed at the district level. Once the secure file link in the VT-SBAC portal is operational, the state will not be accepting requests directly from the field. Teachers will need to submit their requests and completed [checklists](#), with any background information, directly to the DA. Special Education Directors are strongly encouraged to be familiar with the process and requests due to the consequences of the TTS accommodation on the ELA CAT for these grades. Use of this accommodation invalidates the ELA score and therefore, parents must be notified and a notation needs to be documented in the IEP that this *accommodation was used and therefore is not an accurate measure of the student's true ability*. Please feel free to contact Linda Moreno at 802-479-1309 or [linda.moreno@vermont.gov](mailto:linda.moreno@vermont.gov) if you have any questions.

### Digital Library: New Resources and Enhancements

#### New Resources

The Digital Library has posted two new Connections Playlists. January's playlists are [Grade 4 Revision](#) and [Grade 6 Geometry](#). Playlists are selections of quality lessons around a specific claim in the Common Core Standards. The selections are grouped by the Smarter Balanced reporting measures of "Above Standard", "At or Near Standard", and "Below Standard". Check out the "[Overview](#)" to learn more. You can find these lists and other in the [VT-SBAC Portal](#) under [Digital Library Connections](#)



#### SNE Compensation

We are pleased to announce that the Digital Library will start offering an honorarium to educators for their contributions. Please see the chart below for the current compensation.

SNE Contract Type	Number of Published Resources	Number of Reviewed Resources	Contract Value	Completion Date
A	1	8	\$400	June 30, 2017
B	2	4	\$400	June 30, 2017

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Linda Moreno at 802-479-1309 or [linda.moreno@vermont.gov](mailto:linda.moreno@vermont.gov).

#### SNE Handbook

The Digital Library has a new State Network Educator (SNE) [Handbook](#)! If you are thinking of becoming a SNE, you now have a reference that outlines the responsibilities of an SNE as well as the new submission criteria. Also, the handbook is not just for new SNEs. If you are an existing SNE, but have been away for a while, please take a look at some of the changes and updates happening in the Digital Library. If you have any questions about becoming an SNE or just want more information, please contact Linda Moreno at 802-479-1309 or [linda.moreno@vermont.gov](mailto:linda.moreno@vermont.gov).

### Digital Library: January Enhancements

Below are the new collaboration features of the Digital Library.

Personal Favorites Collection – Educators can now create and share personal collections of their favorite resources.

Goal Setting and Tracking – If you are working towards a goal, such as the one of the resource contracts above, you can download a certificate that displays your progress.

Rate and Discuss Resources – Each resource now has a tab where teachers can rate and provide feedback.

State Specific Forums – Each state now has the capability to create discussion forums in the Digital Library. If you have any ideas or would like a specific forum created, please contact Linda Moreno.

Notifications – Educators now have the option to have notifications sent when a new feature is added to the library.

### Question of the Week

***I heard that if a student uses the TTS ELA CAT (3-5) accommodation, the state will invalidate the test?***

No. The state is not formally invalidating the tests at this time. This accommodation in grades 3-5 on the ELA CAT did not appear to be overused last year, and we do not expect it will be overused this year. However, IEP Teams should be aware, and parents should be informed, that the ELA score itself will not be *valid*, and therefore, should not be used for diagnostic or screening purposes.

