

## Smarter Balanced Assessment Team

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

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Questions?

Please contact:

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## From the Test Director

### A plea for patience and understanding

First of all, I want to be sure you all know that Linda Moreno and I want to do everything we can to support you during test administration. However, you may not know that every day we are checking and approving appeals, processing health exemptions and requests for special accommodations, providing support by phone and e-mail, and working with our vendor to resolve technology issues. We are extremely pleased that so many of you want to do the testing correctly and reach out for help when you need it. However, there are a few things we hope you will do to help us:

- Please keep in mind the person who will be able to answer your question. Questions about test administration and all the related technologies should be addressed to the helpdesk. I'm your guy for policy questions, and Linda will be glad to help you with questions about accessibility and students from special populations.
- Please, if you don't get an immediate response from us, be patient and understand that we try to respond to all your messages in the order we receive them, but we must do a bit of triage to ensure that situations that have an immediate impact on students are resolved as soon as possible.
- Please communicate with your staff and colleagues. If you are receiving the newsletter, please forward it, or parts of it, as you see fit.
- Finally, during these busy weeks, it would help if the communication came from the District Test Administrator, School Coordinators, or Special Education Directors/Coordinators. DAs, SCs and Special Education Directors/Coordinators all benefit from the questions of those who are on the frontline administering the test. We understand that some issues arise in the moment of testing, and we understand that we may get calls directly in these cases.

**Michael Hock, Director of Educational Assessment**

**From the Director's  
in-box****Participation Codes**

**To:** Michael Hock

**From:** A District Test Administrator and Technology Coordinator

**Subject:** Non-participation Students?

**Message:** Hello, I have several ELL students who have been in the US for less than a year.

Therefore they need to be exempt from the ELA portion of the SBAC test. Do I go to View/Edit Non-Participation Codes>Select the Student> (in TIDE)?

Correct. This is a new feature in TIDE that will help ensure the accuracy of participation rates and other calculations available in the Online Reporting System. Once you are in TIDE, select the "Participation Codes" tab along the top of the page, and then enter the SSID for a student who is eligible for a test exemption, either a first year English Language Learner or a student with a health exemption. Once the student's name comes up you can click on view, and then enter one of the two appropriate codes. This will remove the student from participation rate calculations and from the denominator for any other group report calculations. Please note that these codes can only be entered by the District Administrator and the health exemption code should only be entered after submitting an approval form to the state test director and receiving confirmation that the exemption has been approved.

**Students who have been placed in a Program/Independent School**

This year we were able to have both the reporting school and the testing school receive student results. However, there may still be some confusion around whether or not one needs to delete students in order to have another district pick them up.

This year, you no longer need to delete the student if they have moved to another district in Vermont. When the student arrives in their new school, TIDE is programmed so that the Testing School can enter the new student's i.d. and pull them into the current school's population. In this scenario, you would leave the student in your TIDE, and once the new district/school added him or her, the name would disappear from your population. If you had already deleted the student, there are still no worries. Students are always in the system. When a district deletes the student, s/he still exists in TIDE, just not in that school.

Please Note: Because independent schools are considered their own SU in TIDE, the DA will not be able to "transfer" that student to the program or independent school. The independent school must "add" the student to their population. The reporting school will still need to contact the independent school to make sure this was done and that the students are, in fact, going to be tested onsite.



### From the Newsletter Archives – SBAC and Social Media (From March 17, 2015)

When you prepare your students for the assessment, please be sure to tell them they may not use cell phones during the assessment, and in particular, may not take photographs of the test. You may also want to mention that Smarter Balanced will be monitoring social media sites like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter throughout the entire three months of testing and will report any infractions of this rule to the State Testing Director, who will alert the school principal. Students who violate this rule will be subject to disciplinary action. Michael Hock, Director of Educational Assessment, [michael.hock@state.vt.us](mailto:michael.hock@state.vt.us) / 802-479-1288

Update: In response to concerns that it may infringe on students' rights to privacy, Smarter Balanced is currently reviewing its practice of monitoring social media sites during the test window. However, until we hear otherwise, your students should assume that posting pictures of their tests on social media sites will not go unnoticed.

### Question of the Week:

**If my student is reading below grade level, even multiple years below level, do they qualify to have the TTS/Read Aloud Accommodation in grades 3-5?**

Every student is unique. Generally speaking, simply reading below grade level, even several years below level, will not qualify that student for this accommodation. Often, there can be another disability that is underlying the delay in reading. It is the underlying disability that may or may not influence this decision. If the student has a system of decoding for which they can demonstrate their reading ability on a consistent basis, then they would not qualify for the TTS/Read Aloud Accommodation until they are in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and decoding is no longer being measured. One other situation that may qualify is a recent trauma, whereby eyesight or processing was affected. In this case, the student has not had time to develop an alternate system for reading (decoding), and may not have an IEP, yet. These students will qualify for this accommodation.

