

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

VT AOE Weekly Field Memo
Updates on *all* AOE Events
[Subscribe](#)



Message from the Director:

Announcing VTSA, Vermont's new Science Assessment. I am pleased that I can now officially announce that the contract for the development and administration of Vermont's new science assessment (VTSA) has been awarded to the **American Institutes for Research**. AIR, as you may already know, also has the contract for our Smarter Balanced English Language Arts and Mathematics tests. Here are several reasons why this is good news:

- All of the digital systems we have been using to administer the Smarter Balanced tests will also be used to deliver VTSA. There will be no need for educators to learn how to use different systems for student registration, test delivery or online reporting. All of these systems will continue to be accessed via the [Vermont Assessment Portal](#)
- It will only be necessary to enter student information into TIDE once. When the data upload is completed, students will be all set to take any of the three tests.
- The student-testing interface will look the same for all three tests and will include all the same universal tools.
- Most of the online accessibility tools that are available for students from special populations on the Smarter Balanced tests will also be available for science.
- Although teachers will still need to complete the Online Test Administration Module each year, they only need to take it once in order to administer any of the three tests.
- Science results will be available on the AIR online reporting systems and will include all the same analysis tools that have been available for ELA and Math.
- TIDE has been re-formatted so that on-line accessibility tools can be entered for a student for all three tests at the same time, and it will be clear if a particular tool is not permitted for a specific test.
- VTSA will be fully aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards.
- Through our contract with AIR, Vermont has been able to join an item development collaborative of 11 states who are creating and sharing test questions and item clusters. This will give Vermont access to a large pool of high quality test items without breaking the bank.
- Because the test is delivered by computer, we have been able to use technology enhancements to the test items that will allow students to manipulate variables and draw conclusions based on the data that is recorded for them by the test engine. The main emphasis of the new test is on how scientists work rather than science content.

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

Gabriel McGann for
Science & PE Assessments,
Exemptions & Appeals
Gabriel.McGann@vermont.gov
802-479-1444

Goma Mabika
NAEP
goma.mabika@vermont.gov
802-479-1366

- VTSA will actually be shorter than our old friend the NECAP. Estimated testing time is approximately 2 hours that can be administered in four ½-hour blocks, two 1-hour blocks, or one 2-hour block.
- Vermont’s contracting partnership with Rhode Island, which started with NECAP in 2004, continues with the new science test. This partnership helps keep the cost of the contract down, and has the additional advantage of bringing together teachers and state level content specialists from the two states to review test item clusters, set proficiency cut scores, and in general, share ideas and incubate innovations.

Gabriel McGann (gabriel.mcgann@vermont.gov) is taking on project leadership for the VTSA. Maggie Carrera-Bly (Margaret.Carrera-Bly@vermont.gov) is coordinating item development and review. Linda Moreno (linda.moreno@vermont.gov), as always, is taking the lead on making sure the test is accessible to students from special populations. Feel free to e-mail any of us if you have questions.

Michael Hock, State Assessment Director

Mt. Snow Regional Training – Live Webinar

The Vermont Assessment Team in conjunction with the AIR Project Management Team will be hosting a live “[Regional Training](#)” webinar on Thursday, March 8th. The training has been condensed from 3 ½ hours down to 1 ½ hours, and will cover the new Vermont Science Assessment (VTSA), the new 9th grade Smarter Balanced High School Assessment, and many system upgrades. This is a live interactive webinar so participants will be able to ask questions. More information and registration is available under *Recent Announcements* on the [VTCAP portal](#).

VT PE Assessments

Brockport Companion Regional On-site Trainings:

Monday, March 12th – [Champlain Valley Union High School](#) (CVU) 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13th – [Hartford High School](#) 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Many have already signed-up, but if you missed the invitation from your Superintendents or District Test Administrators (DA), please contact your DA to make sure there is a representative from your district who will be attending one of the Brockport Companion trainings. We have now opened it up to a third person on a first come first served basis. If you are interested or would like to bring a third person, please register by clicking on either the CVU or Hartford links above. The Brockport Physical Fitness Manual (w/online access) and the Strategies for Inclusion book will be distributed at the trainings.

Hold the date: FitnessGram: Follow-up Training Webinars (links for registration will be forthcoming)

March 14, 3:00 p.m. – FG Software training

March 15 – Posting Part I webinar of first PE Assessment Trainings (VT FG story and PYFP Module 1)

March 15, 3:00 p.m. – Live webinar of FG Protocols



New Posts to the Vermont PE Assessment Webpage:

If you haven't visited the PE Assessment webpage recently, there has been new information posted:

[NEW Updated FAQ Link](#)

[PE Assessment Implementation Checklist](#)

[PE Educator Certification Process](#)

Please feel free to reach out to [Gabe McGann](#) or [Susan Yesalonia](#) with any questions pertaining to Physical Education Assessments.



From the Inbox

From: An Elementary School Principal

Subject: Question About SBAC Accommodation

Hi Michael,

How are you doing? It has been awhile since we last talked, but I usually reach out during our annual Interim SBAC season (not long after buckshot but before mud season).

As you know, I am still fairly new to elementary-level assessment. If all students routinely have questions read to them, such as for math problems, may we put in this accommodation for all students tested? What about other accommodations that are provided to all students from time to time, but not necessarily included in individual students' plans?

Thank you for your help.

Response:

Other than having pneumonia, I'm terrific. Thanks for asking.

There isn't any prohibition on using a Designated Support and Universal Tools are already available to the whole class, but it may not actually be as beneficial as it might seem. Keep in mind that Accommodations are reserved only for students on an IEP or 504 plan. The problem with blanket assignments of any accessibility tool is that our new tests are designed to be self- pacing. Both text to speech and human read aloud will increase the length of the test session for your good readers and therefore would be more of a liability than a benefit. You also need to be cautious if you use a human reader that the individual is trained to read like a computer voice, the concern being that the reader might put emphasis on particular words that would provide an unfair advantage. Our preference would be that teachers meet before testing to determine which students might be negatively impacted by their reading ability. Provide them with the accommodation and let the rest of the students rely on the good reading skills you've taught them.

Michael Hock, State Assessment Director



Operating Systems Update

If you haven't already updated your Apple platforms to iOS 11.2.5, please do. This patch is to protect against the Spectre and Meltdown attacks. These attacks can infect both Mac and Windows operating systems.

Educator Opportunities

The AOE would like to thank the educators who have helped with the development of the new VTSA and their supervisors who allowed them to attend the item development and review workshops.

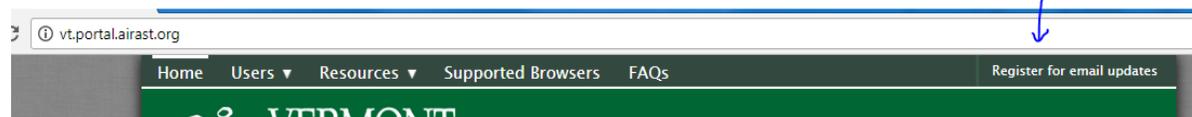
Fast approaching is our Content and Fairness Item Reviews being held in Burlington, VT on Tuesday, March 20th (Elementary), Wednesday, March 21st (Middle), and Thursday, March 22nd (High School). Formal invitations should be going out soon to those who have signed up. Anyone, who have not signed up and is interested in the work, should contact either [Margaret Carrera-Bly](#) (content) or [Linda Moreno](#) (Fairness) reviews.

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. Additionally, there is a *TTS or Read Aloud Accommodation Checklist for Grades 3-5 on the ELA CAT Passages* to assist special educators in their decision making process. The [Checklist](#) must accompany all accommodation requests for TTS in grades 3-5.

Coming Soon...

When many of you are returning from winter break, you may notice a few new additions to our VTCAP Portal. Our VTCAP Portal will now include the VTSA and the PE Assessments. Because we often blast training and system updates from the portal, if you haven't already done so, please register to receive [portal updates](#).



Question of the week

What accommodations can we expect to see on the VTSA?

A: Most everything available on the Smarter Balanced Assessments will be available on the VTSA. There are only a few exceptions, and one must be mindful of the testing construct for the appropriate delivery of the accommodation. Not all accommodations follow the same protocol for each content area. If you have any specific questions, please feel free to contact [Linda Moreno](#). Contact information is in the margin of this newsletter. The VTSA Accessibility Manual will be available on the VTCAP portal shortly.

