Oregon’s Smarter Balanced Field Test

Assessment

OVERVIEW:

Background

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)—composed of 20 states, Oregon included, and the U.S. Virgin Islands—completed a practice run of new, college- and career-ready assessments in English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics for students in grades 3 through 8 and high school between March and June of 2014. With more than 4.2 million students participating across 16,549 schools, the Smarter Balanced field test stands as the largest of its kind in the history of education in the United States.

Field testing represents an essential step in developing high-quality assessments. For SBAC, the intent of the field test was three-fold: ensure the quality of assessment items and the online testing system; generate data for use in setting preliminary achievement standards; and evaluate the capacity of current technology and test administration systems to implement the new assessments on a broad scale. As part of SBAC's commitment to developing next-generation assessments that are accurate and fair for all students, over 19,000 items and performance tasks were tested to ensure alignment to and measurement of student achievement against the Common Core State Standards.

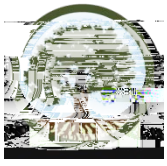
Purpose

Noted above, the primary purpose of the field test was to ensure the functionality of item types, embedded tools, and the general assessment delivery system. Additionally, 13 of 20 Consortium states chose to collect educator test administrator (TA) and student feedback to assess the readiness of their schools to administer and students to take the new summative assessments. Here, field test feedback provides an important, more individualized snapshot of state readiness in the areas of test administration, curriculum alignment to adopted content standards, and student preparation for higher education and the 21st Century workplace.

In Oregon, 195 schools across 78 districts participated in the Smarter Balanced field test, totaling more than 24,000 participants. Specifically, 16,803 students completed the math test and 14,965 completed the ELA test. Post-test, our goal was to capture the experiences of those involved in the testing process to better understand what works well and what requires further improvement as we move into our first operational year (2014-15). In addition to Oregon-specific observations, this report features general results from feedback collected across the consortium to provide a more holistic picture of the Smarter Balanced field testing experience.

Process

We provided student surveys and teacher/test administrator (TA) questionnaires to all Smarter Balanced field testing schools with submission guidelines and collected responses during a two-week window from May 28th to June 11th, 2014. To supplement questionnaires, we conducted focus groups with students from schools that responded to a recruitment email sent to all field testing schools. Participation in both feedback venues was voluntary.



Results

Approximately 2,549 Oregon students and 93 educators/TAs (survey + focus group participants) provided feedback on their testing experiences. Responses include both descriptive information (i.e. grade level, test hardware, etc.) and dialogue regarding the testing experience. Students in grades 3- and 11 responded to the survey, with sixth and eighth graders representing the majority of student respondents at a combined 47% of total. 9% of respondents did not provide their grade. 82% of student respondents took the field test on a desktop computer, with another 14% using some form of tablet (4% did not answer). We also conducted focus groups with students from five different schools and across grades (4th, 5th, 6th, 8th, and 10th). We did not record focus groups but collected notes and verbatim quotes.

Questions included:

- What did you think about the test?
- What would you tell your friends and other students who ask what they need to do to be prepared for the test?
- What would you tell teachers to do to help students be prepared for the test?
- If you were talking to the test developers, what would you recommend?

Dialogue from both focus groups and open-ended responses on questionnaires

Oregon Lessons Learned

Consortium Lessons Learned

SBAC collected and synthesized the results of surveys collected from 19,600 students and 4,946 adults (administrators, classroom teachers and proctors, test coordinators, and others closely involved in field test administration) across 13 of the 20 member states. Five key findings, listed verbatim below, were provided in the Smarter Balanced Field Test Report released to the consortium in late October 2014.

These findings are entirely those of the author of the report, and are intended to assist state and district planning alongside individual state feedback collection efforts. In addition to these findings, SBAC's report indicates that instructional alignment to the Common Core State Standards is lacking and must be strengthened, particularly in the upper grades, if students are to perform well on Smarter Balanced. This finding is mirrored often

RECOMMENDED PRACTICES*

Test Administrator Preparation:

- Visit the OAKS portal http://oaksportal.org/ regularly to stay up-to-date on important information.
  - The portal serves as a central location for information, resources, and technical help, including:
    - Policies and Procedures – Includes links to Oregon's Test Administration Manual, Oregon Accessibility Manual, TA User Guide, and more
    - Training Site—Allows TAs to practice setting up test sessions and administering some practice tests that mirror the functionality of the secure, operational tests.
    - Supported Web Browsers + Technical Documentation

  ODE and its vendor will continue to add new resources to the portal throughout the year, which schools/districts can use to assess their technology readiness and update TAs on test administration procedures and promising practices (e.g. In-Class Activity + Performance Task instructions; Sample Test