

The logo for SMARTER (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium) features the word "SMARTER" in a bold, white, sans-serif font inside a green rectangular box. The box is set against a white background that is part of a larger green banner at the top of the page. The banner has a white curved line that sweeps across it from left to right.

Balanced Assessment Consortium

www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER

May 3, 2011

Jack Jennings
President and CEO
Center on Education Policy

Dear Jack,

Thank you for sharing the Center for Education Policy's experience and insight through your recent open letter to the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium. I can affirm that the Consortium leadership shares your commitment to serving all students equitably through fair, valid, and rigorous assessments combined with accurate and actionable reporting.

Your letter offered three specific suggestions related to our development of an assessment system aligned to the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English language arts:

- “Routinely report mean (average) scores on your assessments for students overall and for each student subgroup at the state and local levels, as well as across the consortium. This should be done in addition to reporting the percentages of students reaching various achievement levels.”
- “Report achievement gaps between subgroups in terms of mean scores instead of in terms of percentages of students reaching various achievement levels.”
- “Establish linkages between the SBAC and PARCC assessment systems so results on select indicators can be compared across all states.”

We are committed to accurate, transparent, and complete reporting of assessment results. Our reports will provide valid information based on multiple measures that can drive instruction at the student and classroom level. Additionally, our documented commitment to using evidence-based design will mean that the reports from the Consortium's assessments will be directly related to the knowledge and skills in the Common Core State Standards.

The combination of equity, accuracy, and completeness will result in an assessment system that illuminates, rather than obscures, each student's current abilities and path toward college and career readiness and ensures that the performance of all subgroups of students, particularly those traditionally underserved, are fully transparent.

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We have already begun collaboration with PARCC on comparability between our two assessment systems. Comparability is a requirement of our Consortium's funding, and we know that it must be built into the foundation of all our work, and it has been one of our first tasks as a consortium.

As you note in your letter, the technical aspects of our assessment designs are being handled by people with considerable expertise. SBAC welcomes the suggestions of all specialists who share our principles and goals. I want to assure you that we have received and understood the insights you have offered and that we share your desire to generate and report accurate and useful data for students in all Consortium states.

Thanks again for your continued interest and commitment to quality assessments. I look forward to continued conversation with you and your colleagues at CEP.

Sincerely,

Joe Willhoft, PhD
Executive Director
SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium