

January 11, 2018

To: Smarter Balanced Chiefs, Deputies and K12 leads

Cc: Smarter Balanced Executive Committee and Smarter Balanced staff

Re: Ongoing due diligence analysis of the summative assessment results

Dear Colleagues:

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium members and staff are committed to providing accurate information to educators, policy makers, parents and students so that students can reach their full potential after high school. Since the release of the 2016-17 test results, several of our Members have received questions regarding the accuracy of the results.

The Consortium ensures the accuracy of the assessment results by implementing industry best practices, including:

- Creating robust item banks that support an adaptive test and cover the breadth and depth of the content standards, and the full spectrum of student performance.
- Providing comprehensive accessibility resources for each item that help students demonstrate what they know and can do.
- Providing an adaptive algorithm that ensures that the tests cover the Smarter Balanced blueprints and measure each student's ability accurately.
- Conducting simulations, in advance of testing, to verify that the adaptive algorithm will deliver psychometrically sound tests using the updated item banks.
- Providing a test package to members' service providers that describes, in a transparent manner, the contents of the item bank to support each service provider's additional quality control processes.
- Providing comprehensive test administration manuals for state Departments of Education to help their educators administer the test consistently.

In addition, Smarter Balanced produces an annual technical report that describes in detail the technical quality of the assessment.

Initial Analysis Shows No Technical Issues

As discussed with our Technical Advisory Committee and members in October 2017, we currently have no indication of a technical issue with the 2016-17 test results. Analyses that support the accuracy of 2016-17 test results include the following:

- A special study conducted by American Institutes for Research (AIR) compared the functioning of the items in the pool in 2016 to the function of items newly added to the pool in 2017. If the new items contributed to the leveling off, this would be apparent in the statistics examined. In fact, the data provided no indication that the newly deployed items in 2017 functioned any differently than the 2016 items in either 2016 or 2017. The data examined provided no evidence that enhancement of the pool contributed to lower scores.
- Results of computer simulations performed in advance of the 2016-17 assessment indicate that students would be measured with the same levels of precision and accuracy in 2016-17 as in 2015-16.
- An analysis of the 2015-16 and 2016-17 banks indicate that for each grade and content area, between 60-70% of the items were shared between the item banks over the two years.



Additional Verification

After consulting with our Technical Advisory Committee, Smarter Balanced staff determined that we will conduct the following additional analyses to further verify the results and will include them in the 2016-17 Technical Report:

- **Extension of AIR's study to additional member jurisdictions.** By including more member data in this analysis, we can provide an even more generalizable test of whether results would have been the same or different across the Consortium if the 2016-17 tests did not include newly operational items.
- **Analysis of changes in testing patterns.** An analysis of changes in testing patterns (e.g. the amount of time students spent on each test or the time frame in which states tested) that may help to provide context regarding the 2016-17 results, especially if there are any differences between 2015-16 and 2016-17.

Smarter Balanced staff plan to provide an initial report of the results of the analysis in early March 2018, and plan to complete the full technical report that will include these analyses (among all the other technical information) by July 1, 2018.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Alpert". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tony Alpert
Executive Director
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium