SMARTER BALANCED ASSESSMENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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Overview

- Initial Achievement Level Descriptors (ADLs)
- The four types of ADLs
- Our response to the draft document
- Assessment - sample test items
- Implications of full implementation of Smarter Balanced Assessments for Regents universities
- Planning for full implementation of Smarter Balanced Assessments
Initial Achievement Level Descriptors (ADLs)

- ALDs are a means of describing performance on standardized tests in terms of levels.
- Smarter Balanced will use four levels to report performance: Level 1, level 2, Level 3, and Level 4.
- Smarter Balanced assessments cover only English language arts/literacy (ELA/literacy) and mathematics.
- ADLs are of four types determined by use, purpose, and intended audience.
The four types of ADLs

- **Policy ADLs** - *use* - test development and conceptualization, *purpose* - set tone for rigor of performance standards, *intended audience* - policymakers

- **Range ADLs** - *use* - item-writing guidance, *purpose* - define content range and limits, *intended audience* - item writers and test developers
The four types of ADLs

- Threshold ADLs - use - cut-score recommendation and standard-setting guidance, purpose - define threshold performance at each achievement level, intended audience - standard setting panelists
The four types of ADLs

- Reporting ADLs - **use** - test score interpretation, **purpose** - describe knowledge, skills, and processes test takers demonstrate and indicate knowledge and skills needed to attain next achievement level, **intended audience** - stakeholders, e.g. parents, students, teachers, K-12 leaders and higher education officials
The Four Achievement Levels

- Level 4 - student demonstrates thorough understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills associated with college content-readiness
- Level 3 - student demonstrates adequate understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills associated with college content-readiness
The Four Achievement Levels

- Level 2 - student demonstrates partial understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills associated with college content-readiness
- Level 1 - demonstrates minimal understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills associated with college content-readiness
Our Response to the Draft Document

Positive Attributes:

▶ Assessments would encourage accountability in K-12 education
▶ Proficiency in the content areas would be demonstrated according to uniform standard
▶ Conceptual framework is coherent
▶ Classification of ADLs into (a nice small number of) four types
▶ Outcomes reported in terms of (a nice small number of) four levels
Our Response to the Draft Document

Positive Attributes:

- Sample terms items show promise of an assessment regime aligned with the CCSS
Our Response to the Draft Document

Concerns:

- Designating 11th graders as college content-ready has potential of redefining length of high school education
- Lack of clarity on what college content-readiness means and implications for policy at higher ed. institutions
- The policy that Level 4 student "is exempt from developmental coursework" - implications for placement exams
Our Response to the Draft Document

Concerns:

- It may not be possible to define college content-readiness in a way that takes into account the diversity of higher ed institutions, visions, and practices.
Assessment - Sample Test Items

- Aligned with Standards for Mathematical Practice
- Some of the sample items admit multiple correct solutions based on different, yet acceptable mathematical justifications and reasoning
- Some sample items ask students to construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others
Some items require the use of interactive technology to explore the content of the questions in the items.

Sample items strike a good balance between technology-enhanced questions and questions that restrict the use of technology.
Implications for Regents Universities

- Implication for ALEKS placement exams
- Implications for admissions policies
- The potential PR problem when college content-ready students fail first year courses
- Implications for freshman courses
- Implications for teacher education programs
Some parting questions

▶ What are we doing to prepare for the 2014 implementation of Smarter Balanced Assessment?
▶ Are teachers getting adequate professional development?
▶ Are students and their parents aware of what’s coming?
▶ The train is leaving the station, are we on board or are we going to stay behind?