



# Wyoming Department of Education

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Wyoming becomes a Governing State in the Smarter Balanced Consortium**

**CHEYENNE** - The Wyoming Department of Education was notified on Friday that it was granted Governing State status in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC).

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium is a state-led collaborative effort which has the goal of developing a system of assessments that measure performance of students against the rigorous Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The current 2013 version of Wyoming's state assessment--the Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students (PAWS) is not fully aligned to the CCSS, meaning students aren't tested on all the standards they may be taught.

With its new designation as a governing state in the SBAC, Wyoming is now offered a vote in each decision and a greater chance to participate in the development of the SBAC assessment system. Currently, there are 23 governing states, two advisory states and one affiliate territory in the SBAC membership.

Governing states are fully involved in SBAC and have a vote in all policy decisions, while advisory states have a lesser role. Affiliate members are territories and commonwealths of the United States and/or the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) that have not committed to a consortium, but support the work of SBAC.

The State Board of Education voted in June to become a governing state within the SBAC and last week Wyoming Governor Matt Mead signed a memorandum of understanding with SBAC to allow the Cowboy State to become a governing state.

Even though the state has signed on to be a governing state, WDE and the State Board of Education will work closely with Wyoming educators and the Legislature to ensure the best possible assessments for Wyoming students and schools in 2015.

“Being a governing state lets us have a say in consortium activities, but it doesn’t require us to use the assessments if we decide they aren’t right for Wyoming,” WDE Assessment Supervisor Stephen Marsh said. “Being a governing state in SBAC would give us an inside track on all decisions that affect SBAC programs and services,” Marsh said. “All SBAC decisions are designed to be transparent. All governing states get a vote in each decision and are also permitted to have greater teacher involvement in consortium activities.”

The current contract to produce PAWS does not cover test administration in the 2014-2015 school year, which means the state of Wyoming will have to either decide to join a consortium like SBAC or continue to develop its own state assessments.

While it doesn’t cost anything to be an advisory or governing state, WDE Assessment Division Administrator, Deb Lindsey reports there would be a substantial cost savings in using the SBAC exam versus continued administration of the PAWS, according to preliminary cost estimates. She said the summative assessment through SBAC is expected to cost approximately one-third the cost of PAWS, averaging roughly \$28 per student, as opposed to PAWS’ approximate price tag of \$76. SBAC also costs about half of the cost of administering the ACT for high schoolers.

SBAC is developing a balanced system of assessments and learning aids—with formative, interim, and summative assessment components—that measure achievement and growth toward college and career readiness. The SBAC digital library will also support assessment literacy and formative assessment practices throughout the consortium. The work of Smarter Balanced is guided by the belief that a high-quality assessment system can provide information and tools for teachers and schools to improve instruction and to help students succeed—regardless of disability, home language, or background.

SBAC currently has a practice test available online for students, parents, and teachers. The test interface does not require a username and password, meaning schools and districts can use the practice test for professional development activities and for discussions with parents, policymakers and other stakeholders. The practice test can be found by clicking [here](#).

The WDE is currently recruiting Wyoming teachers to participate in SBAC activities, such as test item writing and state-level review and development of the assets contained in the digital library. Planned SBAC activities for the future include a field test in spring of 2014 and the first SBAC operational test in spring of 2015.

For more information on the SBAC, contact Lindsey at [deb.lindsey@wyo.gov](mailto:deb.lindsey@wyo.gov) or [307-777-8753](tel:307-777-8753).