

A Framework for Examining Validity in State Accountability Systems

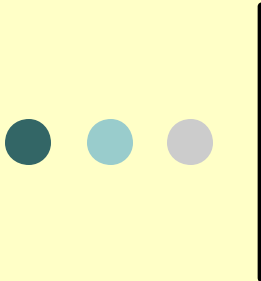
Ellen Forte Fast
edCount, LLC

CCSSO-National Conference on Large
Scale Assessment
June 22, 2004



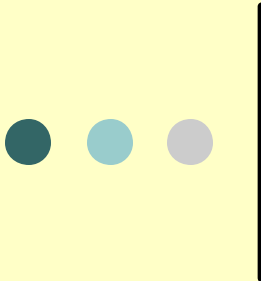
What is validity?

“Validity is an integrated evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the **adequacy** and **appropriateness** of **inferences** and **actions** based on test scores or other modes of assessment.” (Messick, 1989, p. 13)



What are accountability systems?

Accountability systems represent claims that certain educational goals can be achieved by attaching consequences to specific performance indicators.



And validity in accountability systems? What's that?

- “An accountability system can be said to have validity when the evidence is judged to be strong enough to support the inferences that:
 - [1] the components of the system are aligned to the purposes, and are working in harmony to help the system accomplish those purposes; and
 - [2] the system is accomplishing what was intended (and did not accomplish what was not intended.)” (Marion et al, 2002, p. 105).
- Accountability is not Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The overarching validity question is not “does this accountability system pick the right schools?”, but, rather, “does this accountability system do what it is intended to do?”

Picking the right schools is only part of the answer.



Keep in mind that...

- the responsibility for evaluating accountability systems is inherent to the imposition of these systems.
- those targeted by accountability systems have a right to demand and examine evidence on how the system is intended to function as well as evidence on how the system actually does function. They also have a right to defend themselves against undue sanction.
- under NCLB, states are both imposers and targets of accountability. Their responsibility is not to provide evidence that the NCLB prescription is working. Rather, it is to demonstrate their good faith attempts to do no harm and to gather a portion of the evidence on which an ultimate judgment could be made.



And don't forget that...

a state's responsibility is to demonstrate due diligence in the pursuit and evaluation of validity evidence.

It is not to prove that the AYP model is a the best—or even an appropriate—way to judge school quality.



The Framework

- Purpose —

“to assist state and local educators in conceptualizing their plans for examining validity in their accountability systems”

- Structure —

- Part I — Foundations

- What are accountability systems?
- What is validity? What is validation?

- Part II — Framework for evaluating...

- the **goals of the system and the theory of action** by which those goals are to be achieved
- the **indicators** used to make accountability decisions
- the **decision rules** (including AYP) used to determine how schools and LEAs are categorized for the purpose of distributing rewards, sanctions, and interventions
- the **consequences** that are imposed for certain levels of performance as well as those that emerge subsequently



The Framework, continued

Goals

Performance
Indicators

Decision Rules

Consequences

Theory of Action

- What are the goals that this accountability system is meant to achieve?
- Who is to be held accountable for these goals in this system?
- What consequences are associated with different levels of performance?
- What changes are these consequences meant to effect?
- How are the intended changes thought to be related to the overall goals?



The Framework, continued

Goals

Performance
Indicators

Decision Rules

Consequences

Theory of Action

- What indicators are included in the accountability system and how is each used?
- How well do the definitions of these indicators capture what is intended?
- How reliable are the indicators that are used to make high stakes accountability decisions?



The Framework, continued

Goals

Performance
Indicators

Decision Rules

Consequences

Theory of Action

- Do the results of the AYP model support the goals of the accountability system?
- Were the "right schools" identified for rewards, sanctions, and interventions?
- Are the results of the AYP model stable over time?



The Framework, continued

Goals

Performance
Indicators

Decision Rules

Consequences

Theory of Action

- How well are rewards, sanctions, and interventions implemented?
- How do school and LEA characteristics, as well as other facets of the context, moderate the implementation of the consequences?
- To what degree are the intended actions occurring in relation to the application of rewards, sanctions, and interventions?
- To what degree are negative, unintended consequences occurring in relation to the application of rewards, sanctions, and interventions?
- To what degree are the reform activities associated with achievement of the goals of the system?