VERTICALLY-ARTICULATED GRADE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS AND TEST SPECIFICATIONS

Stanley Rabinowitz, Ph.D.
WestEd
srabino@wested.org

Presentation at the 2004 Edward F. Reidy, Jr., Interactive Lecture Series
October 7-8, 2004, Nashua, NH

WestEd

PRESENTATION SET OF QUESTIONS

1. What concerns about vertical scales need to be addressed for full implementation and interpretation?
2. How do various assumptions affect the confluence of vertical scales and value-added models?
3. How can thoughtful test specifications positively affect the concerns in questions 1 and 2 and assessment and accountability programs overall?

WestEd

2004 RILS EXPLORATION

If the goal of the assessment/accountability program is to measure whether:

- **students have achieved a year's growth within an academic year (or other interval—e.g., by graduation); *and/or***
- **schools have provided value-added instruction; *then***

Vertical Scales and Value-added Models have great intuitive appeal, *BUT*

WestEd

PROBLEMATIC REQUIREMENTS OF VERTICAL SCALES

- ***Construct***, **in particular construct invariance and unidemensionality across the *full* range of grades within a content area**
- ***Alignment***, **structure of content standards across grades**
- ***Assessments***, **consistency across grades ("mixed models")?**
- ***Design***, **especially testing students on content they have not been taught or taught in previous years**

Role of test specifications in overcoming problems

WestEd

CHALLENGES OF A VALUE-ADDED SYSTEM: *VALUES*

- **Concept of "one-year's growth" (across grades, content areas, students)**
- **Individual student growth most important measure of school effectiveness (student by student)**
- **Classroom/teacher effect most important factor in student success (vs. school, district, home, community)**
- **Student test scores are a proxy for effective teaching**
- **Changes in standardized test scores are what is valued**
- **Additional challenges: assessment, data systems, political**

WestEd

TEST SPECIFICATION CONSIDERATIONS

- **Start with clear understanding of what content is important and what is less so (vs. unimportant)**
- ***Specificity* of specifications**
- ***Articulation* of specifications (not just standards)**
- ***Performance levels* need to be considered**
- **All *purposes* of assessment/accountability program need to be taken into account**
- **Effects on *special populations* (SE, EL)—interaction with assessment development (*Universal Design*)**

TEST SPECIFICATION CONSIDERATIONS (cont.)

- Development of assessment blueprint:
  - three dimensional matrix
  - cognitive complexity
- Alignment studies (formal and ongoing):
  - vertical and horizontal alignment of standards
  - assessments to blueprint
- What is the meaning of a test score?
- How will test results be interpreted?

WestEd