The Use and Utility of Interim Assessments: Panel Discussion

National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment

Reidy Interactive Lecture Series (Session #10)
Portsmouth, NH

September 27, 2019
Use and Validity

• Assessments are **validated** for **specific** purposes and uses

• Trying to add uses without having necessary validity evidence can lead to **unintended negative consequences**
  • But even if unintended, should they be unexpected?
Utility

utility
/ˈyuːt(ə)lədə/  n

noun
1. the state of being useful, profitable, or beneficial.
   “he had a poor opinion of the utility of book learning”
   synonyms: usefulness, use, benefit, value, advantage, advantageous effectiveness, avail; formal efficacy
   “we have increased the machine’s utility”

2. a public utility.

adjective
1. useful, especially through being able to perform several functions.
   "a utility truck"

2. functional rather than attractive.
   "utility clothing"
Utility and Consequences

• **Utility** is a particular instantiation of **positive consequences**, focusing on the extent to which the **interpretations and inferences support** the intended uses.

• But consequence are not always positive.

• Given the intended/claimed utility values of interim assessments, **negative consequences** are a serious **threat to the validity** of interim assessments.
Theories of action to search for unintended consequences

Where could you anticipate unintended negative consequences?

Unit assessment results → Teachers /leaders meet to interpret results → Teachers determine and implement appropriate instructional strategies → Leaders & teachers evaluate & modify instructional programs → Interim test results improve

Student learning improves → State test results improve
Opportunity Cost and Consequential Validity

• In addition to the potential **overt unintended negative consequences**, there are many that could be classified as **opportunity cost** such as:
  • Lost instructional time
  • Misdirected instructional efforts (wrong kids/wrong targets)
  • Sending the wrong signals
  • Deskilling of teachers and devaluing of teachers’ assessment efforts
  • Other?
Introducing the Panel
Panelists

- **Peg Goertz**, Center Board Chair, Professor Emeritus, U of P
- **Marianne Perie**, President, Measurement in Practice
- **Charity Flores**, Director of Assessment, Indiana Department of Education
- **Mary Williams**, Assessment Specialist, IN DOE
- **Craig Walker**, Executive Director of State Assessments, Oklahoma Department of Education
- **Nicholas Meyer**, District Math Coach, Indianapolis Public Schools
Policy Supports: Peg

• What policy supports need to be in place to support district use of interim assessments?
  • Technology & data
  • Time to analyze and discuss
  • Professional support
POLICY SUPPORTS FOR INTERIM ASSESSMENTS

• Expectations for use
  • Instructional, evaluative, predictive (Perie, Marion & Gong, 2009)
  • Communication of expectations

• Technology and data
  • User friendly
  • Provide actionable information

• Time
  • Analyze and discuss results
  • Reteach content and skills
  • Participate in professional development

• Professional support
  • Technology
  • Data analysis and interpretation
  • Instruction

(M. E. Goertz, L. Nabors Olah, & M. Riggan, Can Interim Assessments be Used for Instructional Change? CPRE Policy Brief, Dec. 2009)
Evidentiary Requirements: Marianne

- What do you see as the primary categories of evidence districts should be collecting from schools, teachers, students (or requesting from vendors) to evaluate the value-add of interim assessments?
  - How and when should this information be collected?
  - What types of decisions would it support?
Responses

• Nicholas, Charity, Mary, and Craig...

• What are your reactions/responses to what you’ve heard from Peg and Marianne?
View from the Statehouse

• Charity, Craig, and Mary please describe your current or planned evaluation strategies of interim assessments occurring at the state level. Are they focused on:
  • Design?
  • Selection?
  • Interpretation?
  • Use/utility?

• How have you had to operationalize these evaluation activities in light of local constraints (control)?

• What are the barriers preventing or limiting these potential evaluation activities?
On the ground…

• Nicholas, please describe the key interim assessment evaluation considerations in your school district?

• Do you have any evidence or even anecdotes to know whether or not these assessments are making a difference?

• What evidence or information do you collect to monitor the impact and perceived utility of interim assessments within your district?

• What tools, guidance or professional development would support you in engaging in evaluation activities?
Responses

• Peg and Marianne...

• What are your reactions/responses to what you’ve heard from Nicholas in his district role?
Needs

• From your various perspectives, please indicate whether some sort of tool might be helpful in supporting high-fidelity interim assessment use.

• What suggestions would you have for whether such a tool or tools should be in the form of a framework, criteria, guided question, or considerations?
Audience

• What questions do you have from any or all of our panelists?