Validating Accountability

Systems: Theory of Action

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So... Process of Validating is

- **Interpretive argument**: Build a chain of reasoning from the test construction process to the desired claims.

- **Validity argument**: Gather theoretical and empirical support for the “truthfulness” of the claims and to establish appropriate boundaries [limitations: “but not if...”]. (Kane, 2004)
Interpretive Argument

- Components of accountability system
  - Purpose
  - Design
  - Implementation
  - Theory of action “details”
    - Before and between test and accountability judgments
    - After accountability judgments & consequences and before next assessment and judgment cycle
Validity argument

- **Validity argument**: Gather theoretical and empirical support for the “truthfulness” of the claims and to establish appropriate boundaries [limitations: “but not if…”]

- Applied to components:
  - Purpose
  - Design
  - Implementation
  - Theory of action “details”
Validity argument (2)

- Does the system:
  - "generate useful information and constructive responses"
  - "without causing undue deterioration with respect to other goals"

- Is the system working? If so, to what degree? If not, why not and what should be done about it?
Theory of Action

- Assessment information interpretation & use
  - State provides...
  - District/school/teachers will do...
  - Students will...
Theory of Action – 2

- Comprehensive System Theory of Action: Student learning will increase, school capacity will increase, and achievement gaps will decrease as assessment is used to coherently signal, evaluate, and inform learning and teaching at each level of the system (at least state, district, school, classroom, individual)
  - Signal: “What is important?”
  - Evaluate: “What do I know about how I did?”
  - Inform: “How can I do better?”
Coherent assessment information that leads to action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>National/State</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Classroom/Individual</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signal</td>
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<td>Evaluate</td>
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<td>Inform</td>
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Comprehensive Systems

- Coherent assessment information that leads to action
  - Focused on outcomes and key processes for reaching outcomes
  - Provides information for external quality monitoring and internal action

- Example of processes: Informative feedback – violin
Some District & School Actions

Reduce achievement gap in mathematics by

■ Common district curriculum and pacing guide

■ Common district interim assessment
  (several times per year)

■ Attention to course enrollment patterns,
  credit (successful completion), and
  associated supports
Common Curriculum & Pacing

Scope & Sequence of Learning Targets

A  B12  C1234  D12  E  F123  G  H123

Sept  Oct  Nov  Dec  Jan  Feb  Mar  Apr  May
Pacing of instruction

End-of-year Assessment

C4,
D2,F2,
G, H13
Design of Interim Assessments

- Assessments designed for different purposes – provide different information to signal, evaluate, and inform
  - Practice & Prediction
  - Curriculum Sensitivity
  - Instruction & Learning Targets (robust proficiency)
Design of Interim Assessments - 2

Sequence of Learning Targets

A  B_{12}  C_{1234}  D_{12}  E  F_{123}  G  H_{123}

End-of-year Assessment

C_{4},
D_{2,F_{2}},
G,  H_{13}

Predictive, Practice Interim Assessments
Design of Interim Assessments - 3

A  B_{12}  C_{1234}  D_{12}  E  F_{123}  G  H_{123}

A, B_{12}
C_{1234}, D_{12}, E
F_{123}, G, H_{123}

C_{4}, D_{2}, F_{2}, G, H_{123}

Recent Instruction
Assessment & Instruction
Structure (Pacing incl. feedback)

A  B12  C1234  D12  E  F123  G  H123

A, B12
Remediate, consolidate, extend

C1234, D12, E
Remediate, consolidate, extend

F123, G, H123
Remediate, consolidate, extend

C4, D2, F2, G, H13
How to construct this type of validity argument?

Questions to guide validating:
- Most important conceptually?
- Practical priority?
- How to do it?

Questions about validation enterprise:
- How detailed?
- Who’s responsible?
- How much?
- What about elements of “theory of action” that is under other people’s control (causal assumptions)?