Toward a Validity Framework for Alternate Assessments Based on Modified Academic Achievement Standards
A Collaborative Project of the Kansas State Department of Education, the Louisiana Department of Education, and WestEd
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This three-year study involves systematic collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data to inform a validity framework for alternate assessments based on modified academic achievement standards (AA-MAS).

### Key Questions

1. How valid (accurate and consistent with federal and state policies) is the process by which students are identified for AA-MAS? Does evidence exist that the intended population of students is being accurately identified for this assessment?

2. In what ways are the states’ AA-MAS improving access for students? That is, does the assessment adequately address the specific access needs of the intended population of students administrators this assessment? Are the particular strategies/models used by the state departments of education yielding AA-MAS that are sufficiently more valid measures (i.e., of grade-level academic content knowledge and skills) for the intended population of students?

3. Are the assessment outcomes (intended vs. unintended consequences, validity, etc.) sufficient to justify the resources (cost, full set of activities, etc.) needed to build this test?

### Methodology

**Phase 1** Document analysis

**Phase 2** Cognitive interviews of students with disabilities and general education students; stakeholder surveys

**Phase 3** Stakeholder surveys; analysis of student performance data

### State A

- **Document analysis**
  - 40 documents (e.g., manuals, reports, item specifications, handbooks, written updates)
  - **Cognitive interviews (concurrent and retrospective)**
    - 120 students
    - Grades 4, 8, and 10
    - Students with disabilities and general education students
    - ELA (using information resources, proofreading, mathematics)
    - Multiple choice and constructed response item formats
    - Matched general education and AA-MAS test items

- **Stakeholder surveys**
  - 225 respondents

### State B

- **Document analysis**
  - 46 documents (e.g., manuals, reports, item specifications, handbooks, written updates)
  - **Cognitive interviews (concurrent and retrospective)**
    - In process
    - General description:
      - 72 students
      - Grades 4, 8, and HS
      - Students with disabilities who are eligible to be assessed in AA-MAS
    - Reading: mathematics
    - Multiple choice and modified measures (MM) item formats
    - Matched general education and AA-MAS test items

- **Stakeholder surveys**
  - 228 respondents (as of 4/28/2010)

### From Survey:

![State A](chart1)

**State A**
- General education teacher: 1%
- Special education: 1%
- Other: 13%
- Principal/school administrator: 1%
- Counselor: 11%

**State B**
- General education teacher: 1%
- Special education: 1%
- Other: 9%
- Principal/school administrator: 1%
- Counselor: 1%

### Preliminary Findings

- Criteria for identifying AA-MAS-eligible students in both states are clear and consistent with federal requirements, and students generally seem to be appropriately identified for eligibility.
- The specific access strategies applied in the assessments are facilitating student access to tested content as intended.
  - Text and typographic feature modifications
  - Test design modifications
  - Linguistic modifications

### Possible Implications

- Access: “More valid” assessments for the AA-MAS student population
- Opportunity to learn
- Growth and status: Expectations of AA-MAS-eligible students vis-à-vis grade-level expectations (achievement standards) and trajectories toward these expectations

### Point of View

Assessment items may be psychometrically sound, but they may not be psychologically sound (based on Pearson & Garavaglia, 2003). Examining the nature of and connections among the characteristics of the students tested, students’ representation of the domain being assessed, and the nature of the assessment will help to inform a framework for evaluating the validity assessment results (Marion & Pelligrino, 2006; Pelligrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001). If we are to obtain accurate measures of students’ knowledge, skills, and abilities, so that we can provide effective and equitable instruction to all our students and help them meet high expectations for learning and achievement, it is critical that we ensure that our assessments, particularly those administered to special student populations, do not introduce challenges (e.g., cognitive, visual, linguistic) that interfere with students’ abilities to fully demonstrate what they know and can do (e.g., measure construct-irrelevant factors, underestimate student achievement or knowledge of a domain).