



National Research & Development Center to Improve
EDUCATION FOR SECONDARY ENGLISH LEARNERS

WestEd 

A VISION FOR USING AN ARGUMENT-BASED
FRAMEWORK FOR VALIDITY APPLIED TO A
COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF ASSESSMENTS FOR
ENGLISH LEARNERS IN SECONDARY GRADES

Brief IV: Using a Community of Practice Approach to Evaluate the Validity Argument for Classroom-Based Assessment

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The Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS) Framework presents a vision for a system of assessments for English Learners in secondary grades that brings assessment closer to the classroom and fully involves teachers in assessment development and validation.¹ The

CAS Framework is intended to signal a new and equitable direction and to provoke reflection and debate among all those concerned with improving outcomes for English Learners. This brief describes the approach to validating assessments included in the CAS.

Validity is the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretation of test scores for proposed uses of tests.²

Validity evidence for high-stakes assessment uses such as accountability, graduation, or certification is often gathered through a series of rigorous studies that may involve convening large groups of subject matter experts or by conducting complex statistical analyses. The outcomes of these efforts are typically written into a technical report, which may be posted publicly or shared with governing bodies such as the federal government or a certifying organization. Most testing programs also retain a committee of technical advisors who review their validation plans and results to provide feedback throughout the process.

However, because the CAS Framework has classroom-based assessment at its core, a different approach to the collection and evaluation of validity evaluation is needed. Rather than being undertaken by external subject matter experts or psychometricians, the evaluation of validity evidence for classroom-based assessment is conducted in a teachers' **community of practice** (COP). An important part of this process is the opportunity to revise assessments and how they are used in order to improve the validity of the interpretations based on student performance.

Validity evidence for the CAS: The process for validating the assessments in the CAS Framework uses Kane's argumentation approach.³ A logic model articulates a series of propositions, which are then further specified into claims for which evidence can be accumulated and evaluated.

Validity is not a property of the assessment but of the inferences made from assessment results and the extent to which they justify the use of an assessment for a specific purpose. For instance, scores from a mathematics assessment may have a strong degree of validity for mathematics problem solving, but a weak degree of validity for students' computational fluency.

Community of Practice refers to a group of teachers within a school who meet regularly to tackle a particular problem of practice and find solutions together.

Logic Model



Propositions



Claims



Evidence

A Variety of Sources of Evidence for Validity Evaluation

Evidence in the CAS Framework falls in one of five categories, generally:

1. Documentation related to assessment development and/or administration of the assessment (e.g., learning goals presented to students, directions for portfolio selections).
2. Individual teacher reflection on specific aspects of the assessment (e.g., teacher reflection on whether the questions, tasks, and activities are accessible to the range of students' zone of proximal development present within the class).
3. Peer observation of assessment processes or supporting processes (e.g., how effectively teachers communicate learning goals to students, observation and analysis of student-to-student or student-to-teacher interactions).
4. Student feedback about assessment (e.g., surveys or interviews).
5. Peer feedback on an assessment claim (e.g., peer review and feedback on the alignment between the breadth and depth of cognitive complexity and language usage represented by the unit goals and the evidence selected by students).

COP Validity Evaluation

The steps for a validity evaluation are outlined below. Further details can be found at <https://www.elrdcenter.wested.org/resources-cas-framework>.

1. Teachers ensure they have a common understanding of the assessment's propositions and claims and how they play out in practice.
2. COP members collect necessary evidence to examine how well a particular assessment meets the desired expectations specified in the claims associated with a particular proposition.
3. Once evidence has been collected, a COP member presents evidence for claims associated with one or more propositions and group members ask clarifying questions.
4. The COP members then develop a consensus judgment of the validity evidence for the assessment and document current status of the propositions and the evidence evaluated for the assessment.
5. The review process may include future improvements to the assessment, improvements about how it is presented to students, supports students might need, or additional sources of evidence that could be collected to identify ways to improve it or the process whereby it is used.

An Educative Process

The accumulation and evaluation of validity evidence is an iterative and **educative** process.

Repeated cycles of evidence review provide opportunities for teachers to:

- increase their assessment literacy;
- deepen their knowledge of simultaneous language and content development and their understanding of quality in the context of classroom assessment;
- improve their analysis, interpretation, and application of assessment information to support student learning;
- make improvements to an assessment question, task, or activity for future use; and
- enhance the quality of newly developed assessment questions, tasks, or activities.

The increased role for teachers in evaluating the validity of assessment is not intended to place undue burden on them. Teachers are not expected to address all their assessments

Educative refers to the teacher learning that arises from engaging with peers in discussions about classroom assessment, standards, and pedagogy.

simultaneously. Rather, the CAS Framework lays out a roadmap for changing assessments in the system to maximally benefit English Learners' development. Implementing the framework should be thought of as a long-term undertaking and teachers will need time and support to engage in this work. The COP might replace (but function similarly to) current practices such as data discussions or meetings in which teacher teams meet to review assessment data and plan instruction.

Endnotes

- 1 Heritage, M., Wylie, C., Faulkner-Bond, M., & Walqui, A. (2021). *A vision for using an argument-based framework for validity applied to a comprehensive system of assessment for English learners in the secondary grades*. WestEd.
- 2 American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association, National Council on Measurement in Education, Joint Committee on Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (U.S.). (2014). *Standards for educational and psychological testing*. Washington, DC: AERA.
- 3 Kane, M. (2013). The argument-based approach to validation. *School Psychology Review*, 42(4), 448-457.



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Suggested citation: Wylie, C. & Heritage, M. (2021). *Using a community of practice approach to evaluate the validity argument for classroom-based assessment*. WestEd.



The National Research & Development Center to Improve Education for Secondary English Learners is funded by the Institute of Education Sciences with a dual charge: 1) to identify and describe the systemic barriers that prevent secondary English Learners from successfully accessing the general curriculum, and 2) to develop and test innovative educative curriculum materials that enable secondary English Learners to reach their full potential in community, college, and career.



The research reported here was supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant R305C200008 to WestEd. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of the Institute or the U.S. Department of Education.

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