



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

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

Brief II: An Argument- Based Approach to Validity

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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 argument-based approach to validation proposed in the Framework.

Validity

Does the assessment information lead to sound interpretations, decisions or actions that enhance learning for secondary-grade

English Learners?² The answer to this question depends on the validity of the inferences made from assessment results for a given purpose.

Assessment purposes include informing ongoing teaching and learning; evaluating learning relative to medium-term goals (e.g., a unit) and long-term goals (e.g., standards); and accountability.

Validity: The degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretation of test scores for proposed uses of tests.³

Validation: The process of constructing and evaluating arguments for and against the intended interpretation of test scores and their relevance to the proposed uses.⁴

Validity is not a property of the assessment but of the inferences users make from assessment results (e.g., scores, qualitative insights) and the extent to which the inferences justify the use of an assessment for a specific purpose.

An assessment may have strong evidence of validity for one purpose but not for another, either because there is limited evidence available or because of what the available evidence reveals. For instance, results 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.

Validity is important for all assessment uses, including the use of questions teachers ask during formative assessment.

The higher the stakes for the assessment use (e.g., accountability), the stronger the evidence needs to be for the proposed use.

The Basic Argument Justifying the Uses of the Assessment

The validation approach for the assessments in the CAS Framework draws on Michael Kane's well known structure for an argument-based approach to validity.⁵ This approach involves two arguments:

- interpretation and use argument
- validity argument

The logic model lays out the conditions and their relationships to each other that need to be in place in order for the assessment to be used for making judgments about student learning status to guide teaching and learning. Propositions and claims for the validity argument are derived from the logic model.

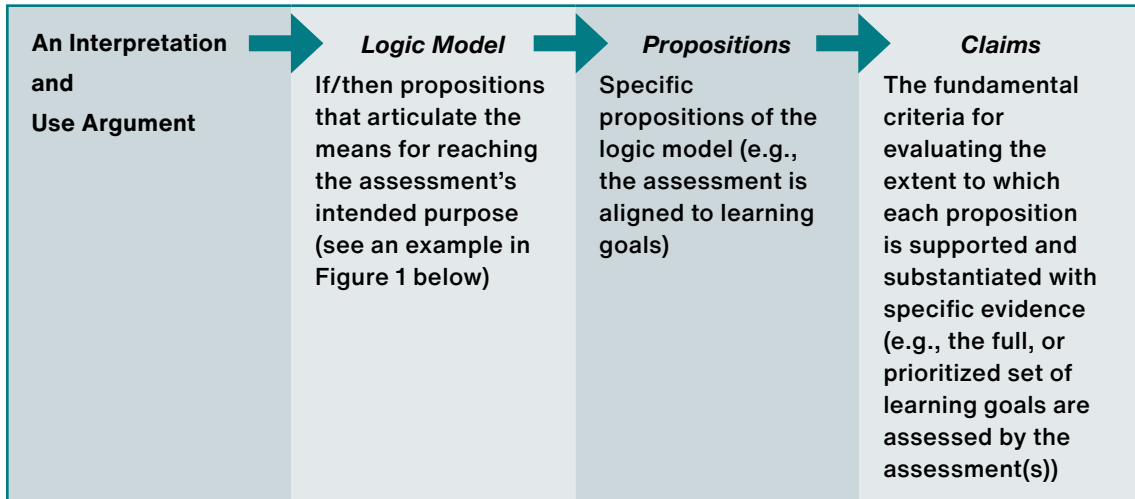
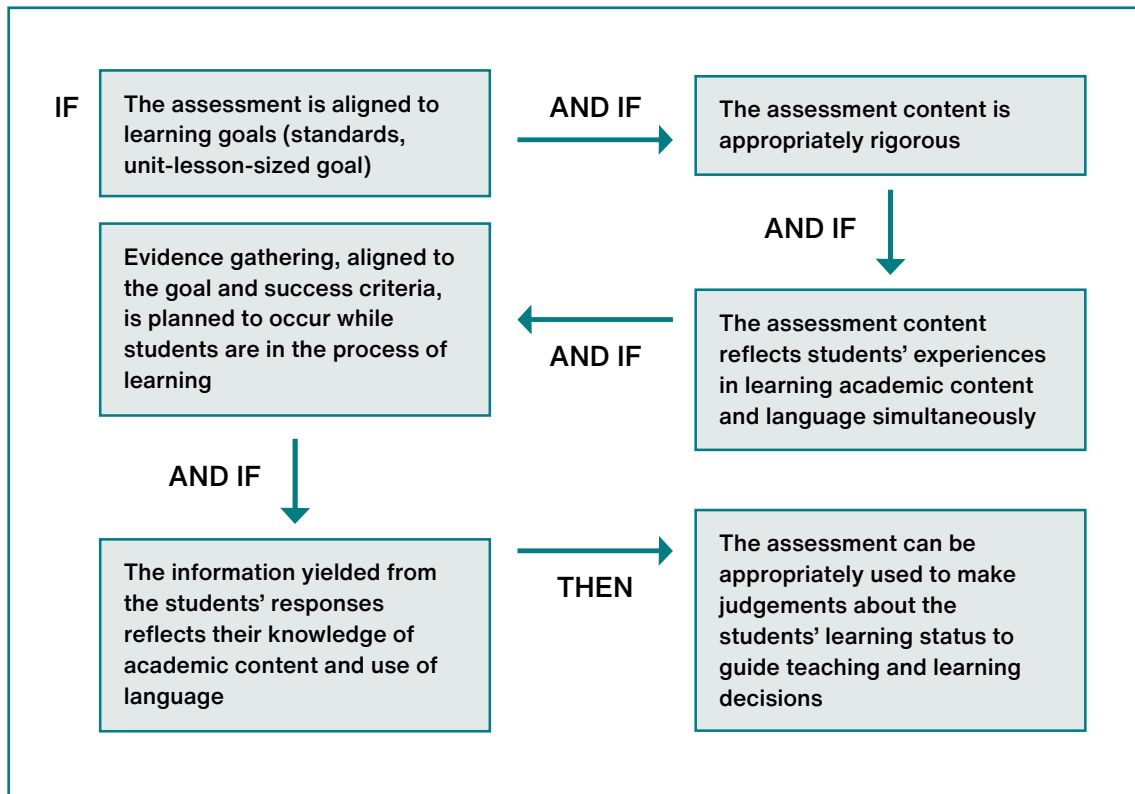


Figure 1: Logic Model for Classroom Assessment of Academic Content Knowledge and Language



Validity Argument

Evidence is collected for each of the claims in interpretation/use argument. The evaluation of this evidence then forms the **validity argument**. For example, **a source of evidence** for the claim *the full, or prioritized set of learning goals are assessed by the assessment(s) would be documentation (e.g., assessment blueprint) of the full, or prioritized set of goals addressed by the assessment.*

The evaluation of the accumulated evidence relative to the claims is likely to show areas of strength and weakness and suggest areas where assessments may be strengthened to better serve proposed uses. Validation is an iterative process that builds the case for the use of the assessment. This iterative process can support improvements in the design, interpretation, analysis, and use of a particular assessment.

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 Moss, P. A., Girard, B. J., & Haniford, L. C. (2006). Validity in educational assessment. *Review of Research in Education*, 30(1), 109-162.
- 3 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*, p.11. Washington, DC: AERA.
- 4 Ibid
- 5 Kane, M. (2013). The argument-based approach to validation. *School Psychology Review*, 42(4), 448-457.



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