Best Practices in Educational Assessment

How can I increase my confidence in assessment scores?
Be Aware

- Decisions that educators make in their classroom on a daily basis have considerable power over students. Even if held unconsciously, beliefs about a student may translate into subtle communications (e.g., offering unsolicited help, using simpler language) that might be harmful to students. Most teenagers are savvy enough to pick on these subtle communications and may exert power in the classroom through behaviors that might seem to be “non-compliant”

- As such, teachers have a responsibility as a professional to use power in classroom carefully and to share that power
Code of Professional Responsibilities in Educational Measurement

- The **Code of Professional Responsibilities in Educational Measurement** (1995) specifies the following responsibilities its members have:

1. Protect the health and safety of all examinees
2. Be knowledgeable about, and behave in compliance with, state and federal laws
3. Maintain and improve your professional competence in educational assessment
4. Provide assessment services only in the areas of your competence and experience
5. Promote the understanding of sound assessment practices in education
6. Adhere to the highest standard of conduct and promote professionally responsible conduct in your school
7. Perform all professional responsibilities with honesty, integrity, due care, and fairness
The code also identifies eight major areas of assessment activity, five of which are most applicable to teachers:

1. Developing assessments
2. Selecting assessments
3. Administering assessments
4. Scoring assessments
5. Interpreting, using, and communicating assessment results

The following slides will go over guidelines for professional conduct in each category.
Guidelines for Developing Assessments

• Clearly state your educational objectives and develop a table of specifications

• Develop assessment procedures that are appropriate for measuring the specified educational outcomes

• Develop explicit scoring criteria (this will help clarify expectations and suggest revisions to wording)

• Develop clear guidelines for test administration

• Plan accommodations for test takers with disabilities and other special needs

• Carefully review the assessment prior to administration (or get a colleague to help)

• Evaluate the technical properties of assessments – If available
Guidelines for Selecting Published Assessments

- Select assessments that have been validated for the intended purpose – usually a manual is available for published tests

- Select assessments with normative data that are representative of the correct target population (e.g., a test normed from 1975 may not be appropriate for today’s students)

- Select assessments that produce reliable results (these data are also available)

- Select tests that are fair (difficulty of vocabulary, depiction of underrepresented groups, etc.)

- Select assessments based on a thorough review of the available literature
  - Possible literature you can reference includes: *Mental Measurements Yearbook*, *Tests in Print*, *Tests* (Pro-Ed, Inc.), *Test Critiques*, and *Test Reviews Online*
Guidelines for Selecting Published Assessments (2)

• Select and use online assessments that you are qualified to administer, score, and interpret (guidelines are usually available for tests – please review them)

• Guard against potential misuses and interpretation (consult a local university, read reviews, norms-technical manual for the test, etc.)

• Maintain test security
  • This includes making sure that test takers do not have access to the test before it is administered and not reproducing or releasing materials or results if it is prohibited
Guidelines for Administering Assessments

- Provide information to students on the assessment before administering it (how much time, is guessing allowed?)
- Administer the assessments in a standardized matter
- When appropriate, modify administration to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities (follow district and school guidelines)
- Provide information to students and parents about their rights and give them the opportunity to express their concerns
- Administer only those assessments for which you are qualified by education and training
- Maintain test security
Guidelines for Scoring Assessments

- Make sure assessments are scored properly (consistent, based on pre-existing criteria) and the results are calculated and reported accurately
- Make sure the score is fair (valid, based on consistently applied criteria)
- Score the assessments and report results in a timely manner (frequent and immediate feedback is beneficial for learning)
- Give students the opportunity to reflect on their score (e.g., discuss and identify correct answers, develop implications for future study strategies, identify strengths and area of improvement)
- If scoring errors are detected, correct the errors and provide the corrected results in a timely manner
- Implement a reasonable and fair process for grade appeals
- Keep assessment results confidential
Guidelines for Interpreting, Using, and Communicating Assessment Results (1)

• Use assessment results only for purposes for which they have been validated (research on the web, review test publications, etc.)

• Be aware of the limitations of the assessment results (send us questions!)

• Use multiple scores and types of assessment information when making high-stakes educational decisions (e.g., one test score is not enough to make a decision about aptitude for math!)

• Take into consideration personal factors or extraneous events that might have influenced test performance (e.g., if student was ill, or if fire alarm went off)
Guidelines for Interpreting, Using, and Communicating Assessment Results (2)

- With norm-referenced assessment, take into consideration any differences between the normative group and actual test takers.
- Report results in an easily understandable manner.
- Explain to students and parents how they are likely to be impacted by assessment results (i.e., how district/school uses test scores, how much this will count toward final grade/placement/college options, etc.).
- Inform students and parents how long the scores will be retained and who will have access to the scores.
- Develop/identify procedures so test takers can file complaints and have their concerns addressed.
Responsibilities of Test Takers

- In general, students are responsible for:
  - Preparing for the assessment
  - Following the directions of the individual administering the assessment
  - Behaving in an academically honest manner
  - Not interfering with the performance of other students
  - Informing the teacher or another professional if they believe the assessment results do not adequately represent their true abilities
  - Respecting the copyright rights of the test publishers
  - Not disclosing any information about the contents of a test