

Volume 1

January, 2008

## The Validity Evaluation for AA-AAS

It is incumbent that alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS) include thoughtful and rigorous interpretations of what the results actually mean. For example, AA-AAS test results could be interpreted as reflecting greater learning in content frameworks as required by NCLB, when, in fact, score variations may simply be the result of the radical differences and complex nature of the range of participating student abilities, and not on increased learning itself. The purpose of this newsletter is to share the evolving heuristic and studies developed by NAAC to help states organize and build their validity evaluation for AA-AAS.

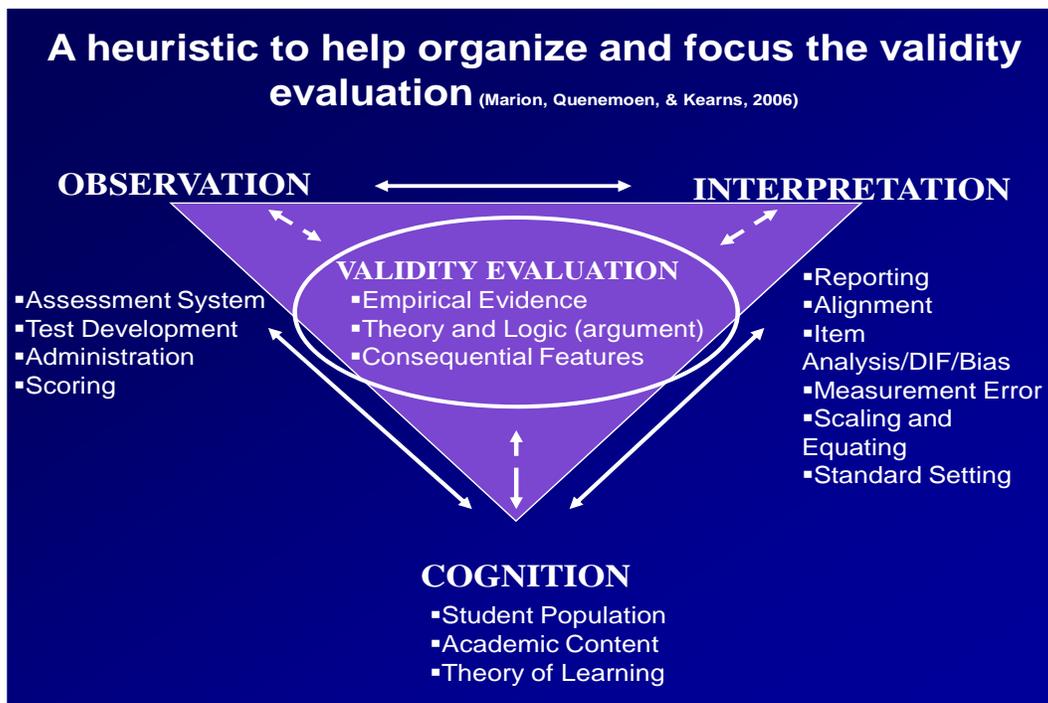
Ed Haertel (1999) reminded us of the importance of constructing a validity argument compared with simply conducting a variety of studies when he noted that the individual pieces of evidence do not really make the assessment system valid or not; it is only by weaving these pieces of evidence together into a coherent argument that we can judge validity.

Similarly, Shepherd (1993) argued that validity evaluation was first the consideration of the basic

consequential features. Specifically, what does the testing program claim to do, what are the arguments for and against the intended aims of the test, and what does the test do *other than* what it claims to do for good or for bad?

The validity evaluation approach presented below is consistent with the heuristic provided by Pellegrino, Chudowsky, and Glaser (2001). Marion, Quenemoen, and Kearns (2006) expanded this heuristic for AA-AAS. The cognition, observation, and interpretation vertices of the triangle both inform and balance the validity evaluation. This evaluation is based on empirical evidence, theory and logic, as well as the consequences of the assessment. The heuristic is intended to help states build their validity argument for their AA-AAS.

A new grant secured recently by NAAC and other partners will work directly with five states to help them build their validity arguments. This developing work is outlined on the next page of our newsletter.



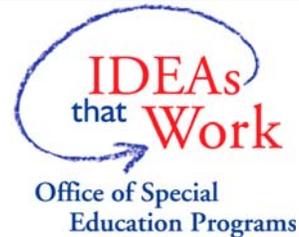


## NATIONAL ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT CENTER NEWSLETTER

Human Development Institute  
University of Kentucky  
1 Quality St., Suite 722  
Lexington, Kentucky 40507

Phone: 859-257-7672  
Fax: 859-323-1838  
[www.naacpartners.org](http://www.naacpartners.org)

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:  
[WWW.NAACPARTNERS.ORG](http://WWW.NAACPARTNERS.ORG)



### Validity GSEG Consortium

NAAC was recently awarded a General Supervision Enhancement Grant (GSEG) to further investigate the validity of AA-AAS. This grant borrows from Ryan's (2002) approach for organizing and collecting validity evidence within the context of high-stakes accountability systems to assist states in weaving individual study results into a defensible validity argument. The focus is not on single studies or even sets of studies, but on how these studies support or refute a validity argument for AA-AAS.

The purpose of this grant is to help five partner states (CT, DC, GA, KY, and Puerto Rico) at various stages of assessment "maturity" begin the task of building validity arguments for their AA-AAS. The first task is for states to conceptualize individual studies to be woven into a coherent validity argument. Secondly, and possibly most impor-

tantly, this grant will convene a panel of measurement and special education experts, with a purposeful overrepresentation of well-known validity theorists, in order to guide states in developing their validity evaluation plan, designing specific studies, and constructing the validity argument. Each state's validity plan will be based on the maturity of their system, the assessment format, and unique factors related to assessing this diverse population of learners. Individually, states will complete their validity studies guided by the expert panel and utilize expert panel meetings and conference calls to share their progress in developing the validity argument for each of their state's AA-AAS. As we progress in our research, further information and products will be available at: <http://www.naacpartners.org/projects.aspx>.

#### Important Updates and Products:

\*New products located on the NAAC website at <http://www.naacpartners.org/products.aspx> include: 1) an Alternate Assessment Annotated Bibliography, 2) a Consequential Validity Annotated Bibliography, 3) Links for Academic Learning: An Alignment Protocol for Alternate Assessments based on Alternate Achievement Standards, 4) a white paper entitled: Setting Alternate Achievement Standards, and 5) the Washington, DC Alignment Study Report.

\*The Standards and Assessment Peer Review Guidance revised to include alternate assessments on modified achievement standards can be found at: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/saaprguidance.pdf>.