

**Creating sustainable and scalable approaches for enhancing educators' assessment literacy: Assessment literacy leaders in Indiana (ALL IN)**

Christopher D. Andrews, David Rutkowski, Leslie Rutkowski, Yusuf Canbolat  
Indiana University

**Project Context**

The state of Indiana recently changed their state-level assessment which caused a lot of concern and confusion among Indiana educators, both administrators and classroom teachers. This change in the state test piqued our interest in creating some sort of outreach or service to help educators become more literate in standardized assessment. This interest in assessment literacy became even more clear after attending an on-campus event for pre-service teachers where one bright-eyed aspiring teacher exclaimed something to the effect of, "I know two things about being a teacher. First, I have to like coffee. And second, I have to hate standardized tests." Another budding pedagogue expressed, "I know standardized assessments are influencing education but we are not taught anything about them in our courses. Why?" While these statements came from pre-service teachers, they are likely not far off from what a practicing teacher might say.

Our project initially focused on the introduction of this new state-level assessment, but while that seemed to be somewhat useful to educators, much of the decision-making and choices regarding that assessment were out of the educators' hands. We soon saw the growing need to address standardized assessments that had a much larger impact at the classroom level: interim assessments. Interim assessments, for the purposes of this paper, are standardized assessments administered to students three to four times during the school year, often to help students and teachers prepare for a state standardized test.

Here in Indiana, the Indiana Department of Education has grant funding available to help schools and school districts purchase interim assessments to use in their schools. This push for implementing interim assessments in classrooms has increased their prevalence in Indiana schools. Understanding how the standardized testing process works and how to appropriately interpret the score reports generated from these standardized assessments (particularly interim assessments) can help classroom teachers and administrators make better and more appropriate educational decisions (Popham, 2009; Shepard, Davidson, & Bowman, 2011). While schools are collecting more data, this does not necessarily mean that teachers are using that data in their classrooms in productive ways that lead to greater student learning.

**Our Project**

To help Indiana educators, particularly classroom teachers, understand interim assessments better, we developed an assessment literacy workshop. The workshop curriculum is based on a set of assessment literacy standards that was largely modified from the Michigan Assessment Consortium (2017) as well as some additions from Measured Progress (Kahl, Hofman, & Bryant, 2013) and our own ideas. The workshop curriculum was also largely influenced by ideas and

activities in Popham's (2018) book written for educators, *Assessment Literacy for Educators in a Hurry*.

Based on our set of standards, we developed a survey that was sent to educators across Indiana. Similar to the development of the standards, the survey was developed through a combination of borrowing or modifying items from existing instruments and creating our own items. There are numerous assessment knowledge and understanding instruments available and we examined all of them (e.g., Gotch & French, 2014). Ultimately, we found items from (Gotch & French, 2013) aligned with our standards and for standards that were not covered, we developed our own items. The items asked educators about their confidence in their understanding or ability to explain various aspects of standardized assessments.

Once the survey was developed, it was sent on a mailing list to educators listed as test coordinators in their respective schools and they were asked to pass the survey on to their schools. Nearly 1100 educators completed at least some portion of the survey; of those, 576 classroom teachers completed the survey. The results from the survey helped us refine our curriculum further.

After the first iteration of our curriculum was developed, we piloted our workshop in a few schools. During these workshops we took notes to identify what topics needed more or less attention in the curriculum. Following the workshop we also interviewed some of the participants to get their input on the workshops and curriculum. This presentation will describe what we learned from the survey, our field notes during the workshops, and the interviews with the participants.

## **What We Have Learned**

One important aspect to come out of the survey was that classroom teachers largely reported not knowing how to use standardized assessment results in the classroom. This information helped us shift our focus to include score reports in many of our activities to help teachers feel more confident in understanding and interpreting score reports. We also identified a reported lack of understanding around measurement concepts like validity, reliability, measurement error, and test blueprints. We then made sure to include these aspects in several of the activities within the workshop.

In analyzing our notes and post-workshop interviews, we identified a few additional adjustments we needed to make to the workshop. For example, many of the educators who attended the workshop struggled to find the relevance of some of the technical aspects of measurement concepts such as item response theory, differential item functioning, and the normal curve. This has led us to adjust how we present certain topics related to validity and reliability in assessment, focusing on more conceptual understanding rather than technical understanding.

Another adjustment that we are making to the workshop is working towards key takeaways from each of our main topics. We noticed during the workshops, and teachers confirmed this in the interviews, that so much of the information was new to them that they had a hard time

figuring out the big ideas. We are focusing the curriculum more and working on making a key takeaways document.

Finally, a huge adjustment we made from our initial workshop is the shift to interim assessments rather than focusing on the state level assessment. Teachers wanted to understand the state level assessment because part of their teacher evaluations were based on its results. However, the state test had a much smaller impact on their day-to-day decision making in the classroom. This pushed us to incorporate understanding and interpreting interim assessments as a much larger portion of our workshops.

Our continued goal is to get teacher feedback as we revise and iterate our curriculum further and to design and build activities that help them appropriately use interim assessment results and push back when they aren't being used appropriately by their colleagues.

## **Moving Forward**

So, what are we doing to increase the sustainability and scalability of our curriculum moving forward? Our initial focus for the workshops had been on the big measurement concepts and getting into some of the technical details of how standardized tests work. That has since shifted to allow much more contextualization from the participants themselves. What we mean by that is teachers are now asked to bring their own score reports from the standardized tests that influence decisions in their classroom. Several of the activities in our workshop ask the teachers to engage with their own score reports. Our face-to-face workshops now help the teachers understand the measurement concepts in light of their own data, score reports, and the standardized assessments that are relevant to them.

We recognize that a face-to-face workshop model is not sustainable nor very scalable with our current team members and funding. We are adapting the face-to-face workshop to an online workshop that will take place over the course of 6-9 weeks. This will allow us to offer the workshop to teachers across Indiana, instead of just those within a short driving distance from Indiana University. Moving the content online will also provide teachers with persistent access to the materials and activities for whenever they need it.

One of the challenges in moving to an online space is that a teachers local context can sometimes be lost. Since we have seen more success and excitement from teachers bringing in their own contexts and score reports from the interim assessments and working with each other, we are moving some of the activities offline. In other words, part of the online curriculum will be asking teachers to complete activities within their own grade-level teams or with colleagues in the school or district where they work.

## **References**

- Gotch, C. M., & French, B. F. (2013). Elementary teachers' knowledge and self-efficacy for measurement concepts. *Teacher Educator*, 48(1), 46–57.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08878730.2012.740150>

- Gotch, C. M., & French, B. F. (2014). A systematic review of assessment literacy measures. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 33(2), 14–18.
- Kahl, S. R., Hofman, P., & Bryant, S. (2013). *Assessment literacy standards and performance measures for teacher candidates and practicing teachers*. Dover, NH. Retrieved from <https://www.measuredprogress.org/caep-paper>
- Michigan Assessment Consortium. (2017). *Assessment literacy standards: A national imperative*. Mason, MI.
- Popham, W. J. (2009). Assessment literacy for teachers: Faddish or fundamental? *Theory into Practice*, 48(1), 4–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405840802577536>
- Popham, W. J. (2018). *Assessment literacy for educators in a hurry*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Shepard, L. A., Davidson, K. L., & Bowman, R. (2011). *How middle school mathematics teachers use interim and benchmark assessment data*. CRESST Report 807. Los Angeles, CA.