



SCILLSS QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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Introduction to SCILLSS

The Strengthening Claims-based Interpretations and Uses of Local and Large-scale Science Assessment Scores (SCILLSS) project is funded by the US Department of Education's Enhanced Assessment Instruments Grant Program. As lead state and grantee, the Nebraska Department of Education is working in collaboration with two other state education agencies (the Wyoming Department of Education and the Montana Office of Public Instruction), four organizations (edCount, ACS Ventures, SRI International, and the Pacific Institute for Research & Evaluation (PIRE)), and a technical advisory panel of 10 experts that contribute an essential combination of expertise in principled-design, measurement, assessment literacy, and classroom practices to support the implementation of this project.

Project Purpose

The SCILLSS project aims to strengthen the knowledge base among stakeholders for using principled-design approaches to create and evaluate quality science assessments that generate meaningful and useful scores, and to establish a means for states to strengthen the meaning of statewide assessment results and to connect those results with local assessments in a complementary system.

SCILLSS Quarter 1 News & Highlights

What We've Been Up To

Between April and May 2017, the SCILLSS project team worked to establish foundations for the project, which included developing project management tools, timelines, and protocols, facilitating weekly and monthly meetings with participating states and organizational partners to share updates and provide feedback, and establishing plans for partners to meet in Lincoln, NE from June 19-20, 2017 for an initial project kick-off meeting. In preparation for the kick-off meeting, edCount developed a Theory of Action (ToA) development guide to inform the development of the state-specific and common project ToAs. During this quarter, the project team also initiated the development of local and state self-evaluation tools for the purpose of assisting local education agencies (LEAs) and state education agencies (SEAs) with critically evaluating and efficiently designing and implementing a

Local and State Needs Assessment Protocols

The set of assessments within an assessment system should yield complementary, comprehensive information. Any assessment that yields information that is (a) ambiguous or only interpretable in an ordinal (more than last time) sense; (b) simply overlapping information gained elsewhere; or (c) not connected to specific, high quality decisions and uses in combination with other data should not be administered.

During Quarter 1, ACS Ventures initiated development of a set of local and state needs assessment protocols designed to help the participating state and local education agencies gather important information about the characteristics and status of their assessment system. The overall outcomes of the needs assessments include processes and protocols that state and local staff can use to evaluate their own assessment systems and to promote better understanding of the components of a comprehensive assessment system and where information can be efficiently collected and evaluated to support inferences about student achievement and integration with learning strategies.

To ensure maximum generalizability and scalability beyond the project period, the project team will provide post-project technical assistance to both LEAs and SEAs to implement and interpret the needs assessment protocol, and subsequently to develop a customized Theory of Action and validity evaluation framework designed to inform improvements to their assessment system.

Applying SCILLSS Developments to Your Local or State Context

The SCILLSS project is designed to benefit states by establishing a framework, a set of tools, and both generalizable and tailored outcomes that contribute to the meaning and usefulness of academic achievement assessment scores.



Theory of Action Development Guide

To ensure that project activities and objectives meet the standards of the professional testing community as communicated through the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing, one must first address Standard 1.0: "Clear articulation of each intended test score interpretation for a specified use should be set forth, and appropriate validity evidence in support of each intended interpretation should be provided" (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014, p. 23). In addition, a state's assessment system should be set up in a way that demonstrates that the end goals of the system were thought about during the design and development phase, also known as the principled-design approach. This approach to assessment development can be illustrated through a ToA, which demonstrates the claims and assumptions that must hold true to support the interpretation(s) and use(s) of assessment scores. Development of a ToA is essential for both the project and the states to understand and reflect on the processes, activities, and desired outcomes.

Thus, each state in the SCILLSS project is in the process of developing a state-specific ToA for their use, which will contribute to the development of a common project ToA that reflects the processes, activities, and desired outcomes shared by the participating states. These ToAs will allow the three states and the project to reflect on how the project and state assessment systems function, and will guide states through each of the project activities.

What's Next?

SCILLSS state and organizational partners will meet for the on-site kick-off meeting in Lincoln, NE. At the kick-off meeting, our team will collaborate to draft state-specific ToAs and discuss commonalities in states' contexts and assessment systems. edCount will use the results from this meeting to draft the common project ToA and validity framework. edCount will also begin developing the first in a series of four assessment literacy modules to share state-specific and generalizable products, processes, and outcomes related to year 1 project activities.

Tips for Getting Started!

Here are some recommended tips for getting started on evaluating and designing an assessment system using a principled-design approach.



Gather relevant stakeholders with varying areas of knowledge and expertise together to critically reflect upon the characteristics of your assessment system and the various claims you want to make about that system within the ToA.



Review the generalizable **Needs Assessment Self-Evaluation Tools** and contact us about how to implement those tools to gather important information about the current assessments within your district or state assessment system.



Read our **Theory of Action Development Guide: Common Project and State-Specific Theories of Action** and start considering your local or state context. Here are some questions to guide your thinking: What are the intended student goals, outcomes, or consequences of the assessment system? What activities are expected of students and teachers? What are some of the conditions that must be in place for the assessment system to function as intended?

Resources

Looking for information on validity and principled-design? We recommend these articles:

Hendrickson, A., Huff, K., & Luecht, R. (2010). Claims, Evidence, and Achievement-Level Descriptors as a Foundation for Item Design and Test Specifications. *Applied Measurement in Education*, 23(4), 358-377.

Huff, K., & Plake, B. (2010). Evidence-Centered Assessment Design in Practice. *Applied Measurement in Education*, 23(4), 307-209.

Kane, M. (2013). Validating the Interpretations and Uses of Test Scores. *Journal of Educational Measurement*, 50(1), 1-73.

Pellegrino, J. W., DiBello, L. V., & Goldman, S. R. (2016). A Framework for Conceptualizing and Evaluating the Validity of Instructionally Relevant Assessments. *Educational Psychologist*, 0(0), 1-23.

Contact Us!



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