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Amrein-Beardsley, Audrey; Polasky, Sarah; Holloway-Libell, Jessica

Validating “value added” in the primary grades: one district’s attempts to increase fairness and inclusivity in its teacher evaluation system.

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Summary: One urban district in the state of Arizona sought to use an alternative achievement test (i.e., the Northwest Evaluation Association’s (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress for Primary Grades (MAP)) to include more value-added ineligible teachers in the districts’ growth and merit pay system. The goal was to allow for its K–2 teachers to be more fairly and inclusively eligible for individual, teacher-level value-added scores and the differential merit pay bonuses that were to come along with growth. At the request of district administrators, researchers examined whether the different tests to be used, along with their growth estimates, yielded similar output (i.e., concurrent-related evidence of validity). Researchers found results to be (disappointingly for the district) chaotic, without underlying trend or order. Using the K–2 test for increased fairness and inclusivity was therefore deemed inappropriate. Research findings might be used to inform other districts’ examinations, particularly in terms of this early childhood test.

Classification: D60 C60

Keywords: value-added; growth; teacher effectiveness; fairness; validity; early childhood; participatory research

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