



Expanding Screening to Support Youth

Whole Child Screener Reliability and Validity Evidence

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Session Objectives



explain the impacts of integrating quantitative and qualitative data in measure development.



describe the process for conducting preliminary testing of a newly developed measure.



analyze the reliability and validity evidence of a new whole-child universal screener.

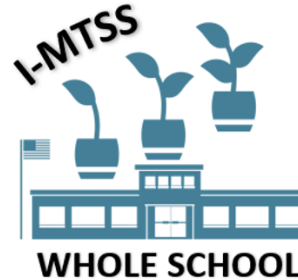
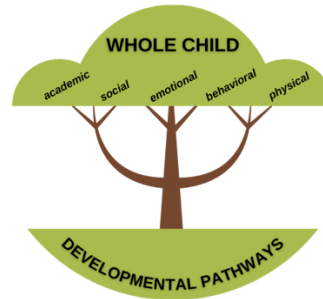
Shortcomings of Current School-Based Screeners

Many school screeners are...

Siloed

Deficit-focused

Acontextual



Integrated Theory:
Whole Child, School, & Community Approach

Chafouleas, S. M., & Iovino, E. A. (2021). Engaging a whole child, school, and community lens in positive education to advance equity in schools. *Frontiers in Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.758788>.

Project ESSY



4-year measurement project

Funded by IES, the goal of Project ESSY is to expand options in school screening. We are developing the **Expanding Screening to Support Youth (ESSY) Whole Child Screener**, an efficient assessment for providing information across important child-focused domains as well as contextual factors that can affect a student's school success.

Shortcomings of Traditional Measure Development Approach



Voices of those who will use the measure, or those affected by measure use, are not included



Measures might be irrelevant or not feasible for implementation



By the time end users can give feedback, it's too late – Measure has already been through validation process



No explicit attention to the potential consequences of measure use

A Shift to Include Key Voices

Instrument
Development and
Construct Validation
Framework

Mixed Research as a Tool for Developing Quantitative Instruments


Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie,¹ Rebecca M. Bustamante,¹
and Judith A. Nelson¹

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<http://jmmr.sagepub.com>



Transformativist
Measurement
Development
Methodology

Transformativist Measurement Development Methodology: A Mixed Methods Approach to Scale Construction

Nicole Leach Sankofa¹ 

Journal of Mixed Methods Research
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Consequential Validity

“If test developers and users want measures to have personal and social consequences and impact, then it is critical to consider the **consequences and side effects** of measurement **in the validation process itself.**”

(Hubley & Zumbo, 2011, p. 219)

An Overlooked Source of Validity Evidence

Consequential Validity

Social consequences
of test use
(Messick, 1998)



Intended positive



Intended negative

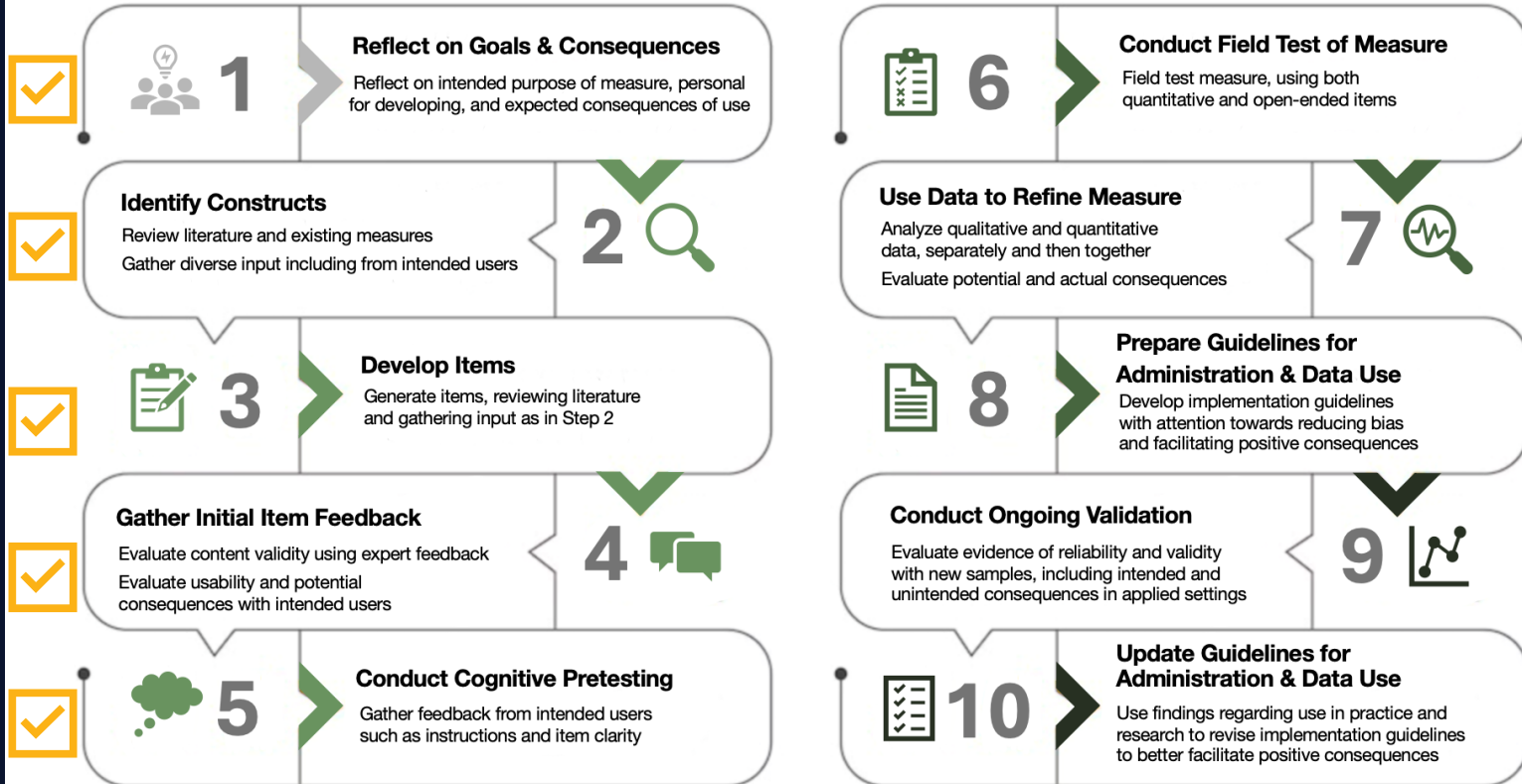


Unintended positive



Unintended negative

Consequential Validity-Centered Measure Development Framework














Expanding Screening to Support Youth

Method



ESSY Whole Child Screener

CHILD DOMAINS Assess individual characteristics and abilities of the child	 Academic Skills such as work completion, attention to task, grades, and engagement, interest in learning	 Physical Health such as vision, hearing, posture, oral health, absence of illness
	 Behavior such as following rules, controlling impulses, speaking kindly to others	 Social Skills such as peer sociability, getting along with others, consideration for others
	 Emotional Well-Being such as awareness of emotions, positive affect, emotion regulation	
CONTEXTUAL DOMAINS Assess relational and environmental conditions that impact child development and school engagement	 Access to Material Needs such as food, healthcare, a safe living environment	 School Belonging such as having a trusted adult and close friend, a sense of belonging in the school
	 Attendance such as arriving on time, staying throughout the day, having few absences	 Social Support Outside of School such as social connections in the community, buffers to family stressors

ESSY Gated Procedures

ESSY Screener: Gate 1 (Broad Screen)

ACCESS TO MATERIAL NEEDS can include examples such as food, healthcare, and a safe living environment.

ACCESS TO MATERIAL NEEDS for this student can be described as:

- ☐ An area of substantial concern
- ☐ An area of some concern
- ☐ Neither an area of concern or strength
- ☐ An area of some strength
- ☐ An area of substantial strength

ESSY Screener: Gate 2 (Targeted Screen)

Almost Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost Always
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Check box if
NOT
confident in
your rating.

Student shows up to school with adequate clothing.
Examples can include clothes that are clean and seasonally appropriate.

☐

Student reports having access to resources (materials, internet, etc.) to complete schoolwork.

☐

Student reports being hungry. *Examples can include requesting or storing food to take home, frequently asking for snacks/food.*

☐

Student reports **not** having a stable living situation.
Examples can include housing insecurity, moving around a lot.

☐

Participants & Recruitment

- **3-5th grade** general or special education teachers from 3 school districts: Worcester, MA; Vernon, CT; New Orleans, LA
- Teachers were primary classroom teachers

District Information

District	# of students	Type	Region	% students of color	% economically disadvantaged	% students with disabilities
N	41,600	Urban	Southeast	92%	84%	13%
V	3,000	Rural	Northeast	50%	37.3%	13%
W	24,778	Urban	Northeast	70%	57.2%	22%

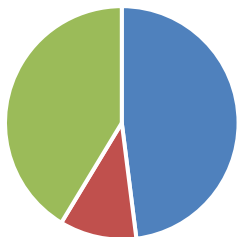
Teacher Rating Distributions

	District N		District W		District V		Total Sample	
Sample Characteristics	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Teacher Raters	36	48.00%	31	41.33%	8	10.67%	75	--
Ratings Per Teacher								
0>5	12	33.33%	5	16.13%	0	0.00%	17	22.67%
6-8	23	63.89%	23	74.19%	8	100.00%	54	72.00%
9>10	1	2.78%	3	9.68%	0	0.00%	4	5.33%
Total Students Rated	189	42.19%	200	44.64%	59	13.17%	448	--

- Teachers rated 6-8 3rd-5th grade students.
- Ratings completed between spring 2024 - fall 2025.

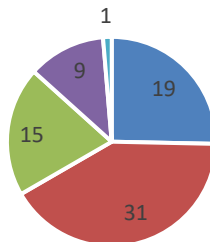
Teacher Demographics

District - Teachers



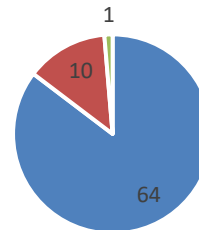
■ N ■ V ■ W

Teacher Age



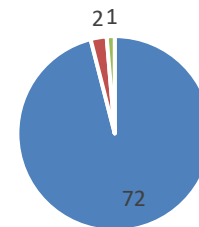
■ 20-29 ■ 30-39 ■ 40-49 ■ 50-59 ■ Missing

Teacher Gender



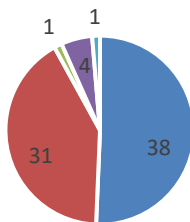
■ Female ■ Male ■ Missing

Hispanic/Latinx



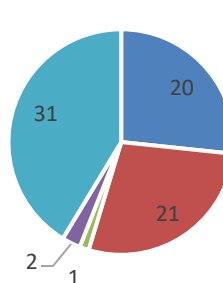
■ No ■ Yes ■ Missing

Teacher Race



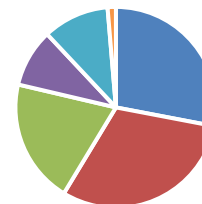
■ White ■ Black ■ American Indian/Alaska Native ■ Prefer not to say ■ Missing

Teacher Highest Degree



■ Bachelor's
■ Master's

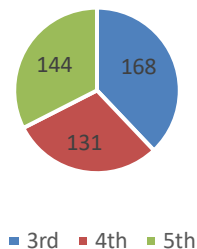
Teacher Years of Experience



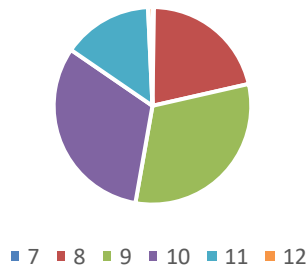
■ 0 to 4 ■ 5 to 9 ■ 10 to 14 ■ 15 to 19 ■ 20+ ■ Missing

Student Demographics

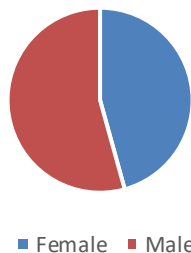
Grade



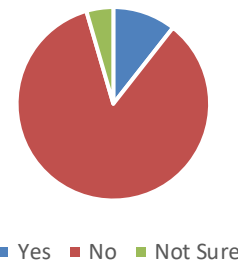
Student Age



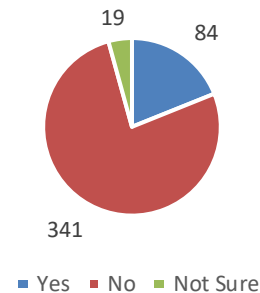
Student Gender



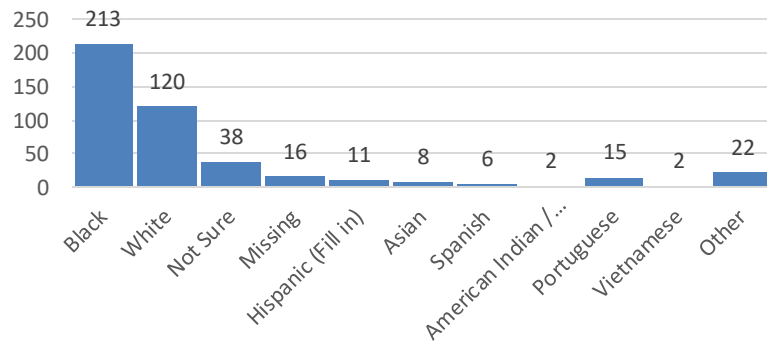
504 Plan



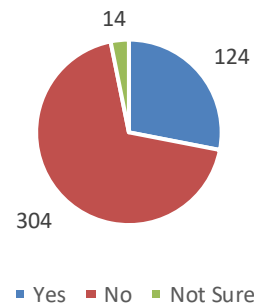
IEP



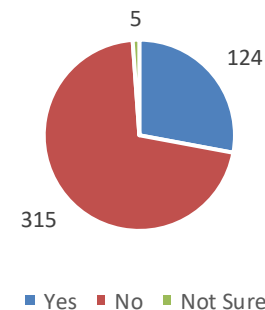
Race



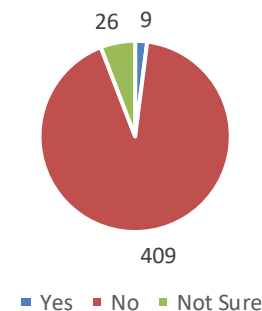
Hispanic / Latinx



ELL



Chronic Illness



Data Analysis

Cross-validation approach was planned

Exploratory factor analysis of **448 student ratings** only

Multiple methods: parallel analysis, EFA accounting for non-normality and clustering












Expanding Screening to Support Youth

Findings



Pre-EFA: 9 Factors Hypothesized

CHILD DOMAINS Assess individual characteristics and abilities of the child	 Academic Skills such as work completion, attention to task, grades, and engagement, interest in learning	 Physical Health such as vision, hearing, posture, oral health, absence of illness
	 Behavior such as following rules, controlling impulses, speaking kindly to others	 Social Skills such as peer sociability, getting along with others, consideration for others
	 Emotional Well-Being such as awareness of emotions, positive affect, emotion regulation	
CONTEXTUAL DOMAINS Assess relational and environmental conditions that impact child development and school engagement	 Access to Material Needs such as food, healthcare, a safe living environment	 School Belonging such as having a trusted adult and close friend, a sense of belonging in the school
	 Attendance such as arriving on time, staying throughout the day, having few absences	 Social Support Outside of School such as social connections in the community, buffers to family stressors

Post-EFA: 7 Factors

Hypothesized Factors Retained

Attendance

Academics

Behavior

Physical Health

Suggested Factors

Social-Emotional Well-Being

social skills, emotional well-being, & school belonging

Supports

social support outside of school, access to material needs & school belonging

Stressors

emotional well-being & access to material needs

Attendance

- arriving on time, staying throughout the day, and having few absences.

Academic Skills

- Reading, writing, math skills
- Academic enablers – persistence, initiation, organization, engagement
- Emotional well-being – growth mindset, positive outlook, confidence
- Alpha/Omega = .95

Behavior

- Physical and verbal aggression
- Follows classroom expectations
- Impulsivity
- Emotion regulation
- Punitive discipline
- Alpha/Omega = .94

Physical Health

- Sight, hearing
- Oral health
- Resources for good physical health
- Alpha/Omega = .76 - .78

Social & Emotional Well-Being

- Social connections inside school
- Prosocial skills
- Emotion regulation
- Self-confidence
- Positive outlook
- Sadness, nervousness
- Withdrawal
- Alpha/Omega = .92 - .95

Supports

- Positive relationships outside of school
- Family-school communication
- Resources for schoolwork
- Extracurricular activities
- Alpha/Omega = .91 - .92

Stressors

- Sadness, nervousness
- Somatic complaints
- Withdrawal
- Family and neighborhood stressors
- Stable living situation
- Alpha/Omega = .74 - .81



Expanding Screening to Support Youth

Next Steps



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Consequential Validity-Centered Measure Development Framework



Next Steps

Collected CFA data through Qualtrics panel



Integrate quantitative (EFA, CFA) and qualitative pieces (interviews, advisory board feedback) to finalize measure



Conduct pilot test during the 25-26 school year

Limitations & Future Directions



Generalizability to other geographic regions, demographic groups



Only teacher report (no caregiver or student report at this time)



Hope to incorporate additional feedback from students


We are looking for elementary schools interested in piloting a new screening instrument in the 2025-26 school year.



For a school to participate, we are asking that:

- At least 2 teachers per grade (3rd, 4th, 5th) participate by completing the ESSY Whole Child Screener for each of their students, once in Fall 2025 and again in Spring 2026
- Participating teachers provide basic information about themselves (e.g., years teaching, grade level taught), and share their thoughts on usability of the screener
- School staff provide de-identified demographic information and educational data for those students involved in the screening

If you choose to participate, Project ESSY will provide:

- Schools with all family informational letters, training in administration, and student-level data reports (including interpretation guidance)
 - Each participating building with \$800 to defray the costs related to administrative data assistance
 - Each participating teacher \$25 each time (fall, spring) that they complete the ESSY Screener for their class
- 
- A thick, green, wavy line that starts from the left and curves upwards towards the right, ending under the third bullet point.

Contact our Project Manager Brittany Melo at b.melo@northeastern.edu to learn more.

Questions or Comments?



Thank you!

To learn more visit:
<https://expanding-school-screening.education.uconn.edu/overview/>