

# Using Cognitive Pre-Testing to Strengthen Development of a Comprehensive and Contextual School-Based Screener

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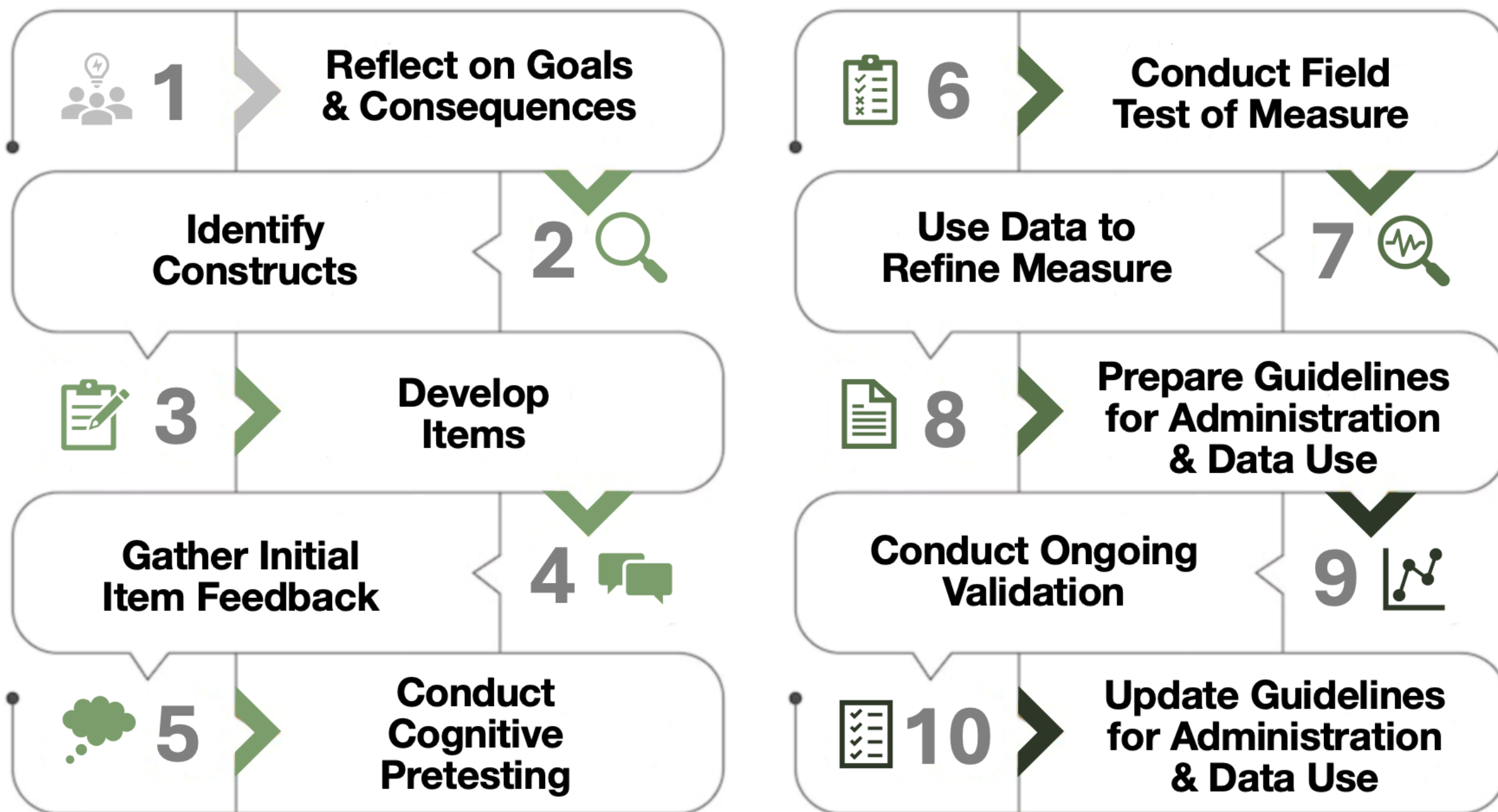
## INTRODUCTION

We are developing the Equitable Screening to Support Youth (ESSY) Whole Child Screener with attention to consequential validity from the outset by gathering input from key groups.

Since developing the initial measure, we have revised it three times based on in-depth feedback from researchers, mental health practitioners, educators, students, and families.

**Consequential Validity (Messick, 1998):** A form of validity that assesses the social consequences of measure use

### Consequential Validity-Centered Measure Development Framework



## STUDY AIM

### Step 5: Conduct Cognitive Pre-Testing of the ESSY

Semi-structured cognitive interviews were conducted with 10 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers to assess how teachers completed and understood the ESSY.

### Our primary research question was:

How did educators interpret and respond to the items on the ESSY Whole Child Screener?

## THE ESSY WHOLE CHILD SCREENER

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

## METHOD

Participants were introduced to the think aloud technique (Nielsen, 1994) and were asked to verbalize their thinking as they completed the drafted ESSY Whole Child Screener.



Content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was used to assess participant feedback related to the screener instructions, items, scaling, and flow.

## FINDINGS

- ✓ **Perceived Value of Screener.** Teachers appreciated the comprehensive and holistic nature of the ESSY Screener.
- 🔍 **Clarity of Instructions.** Teachers found the instructions descriptive, helpful, and intuitive.
- ✎ **Revised Wording.** Suggested revisions on items assessing bullying, school inclusion and belonging, and achievement in math and literacy were incorporated to improve comprehension.
- 🔧 **Selection Errors.** The positive orientation of the Likert scale resulted in selection errors. Bolding was added to draw attention to negatively-worded items.
- ➕ **New Items.** Measuring students' growth mindset as well as sneaky/dishonest behavior were suggested and incorporated.
- 💬 **Qualitative Feedback Boxes.** Participants recommended the addition of comment boxes to allow participants to provide additional context.

## DISCUSSION

Findings suggested overall acceptability of the instructions, scaling, and measure.

At the item-level, some interpretative challenges, selection errors, and suggestions were noted.

Each of these findings informed revisions to the measure prior to a large-scale field test in an effort to maximize intended and positive consequences of use.