MEASURING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING
A Pragmatic Approach to Validity and Reliability

FACTS-AT-A-GLANCE

This brief summarizes evidence for validity in the CORE Districts social-emotional learning surveys. Student self-report surveys measure four constructs:

**SELF-MANAGEMENT**
ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations

**SOCIAL AWARENESS**
ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures

**GROWTH MINDSET**
belief that one’s strengths can grow with effort

**SELF-EFFICACY**
belief in one’s ability to succeed in achieving an outcome or reaching a goal

This brief helps educational leaders think through the most important issues of validity.

"School leaders frequently face constraints and are often forced to make trade-offs around the validity of any survey measures they might wish to use."

**Four questions district leaders should consider:**

1. How well were the measures designed?
2. How well do the measures fit the context?
3. With what level of fidelity was the data acquired?
4. Is the data being used appropriately?

"PACE views validity as: an ongoing process that begins with the purposeful development of a measure, entails accumulating evidence of that measure’s characteristics over time, and relies upon logical arguments that draw from evidence."
Evidence for validity in the CORE Districts social emotional learning surveys

**THE CORE SURVEY DEMONSTRATES:**

**CONTENT VALIDITY**
- it includes the right questions to measure the focal topic

**FACE VALIDITY**
- items clearly signal the construct they are purporting to measure

**STRUCTURAL VALIDITY**
- the items on the survey measure distinct, separate constructs

**RELIABILITY**
- within a construct, students answer the items consistently

"CORE’s design process included research experts and practitioners."

**Students taking the surveys:**
- provide a wide range of responses, producing true variation
- interpret the survey items the same across student groups
- answer the questions similarly regardless of their school context

"This is particularly important for schools and districts serving diverse student populations."

**CORE ensured fidelity by:**
- contracting an external provider for survey administration
- developing guidance around survey administration

"Ostensibly good measures might produce bad data if the survey administration is flawed."

**CORE’s scales are:**
- analyzed and created to be congruent with the expected use(s)
- correlated with other related measures
- predictive of future outcomes

"Having a clear idea about the use of survey measures can inform data collection and mitigate unintended consequences."

To view the full report please visit: https://www.edpolicyinca.org/publications/sel-validity