

The Validity of the New Regents Examinations

Overview

The validity of the new Regents examinations rests most heavily on their sensitivity to the skills and knowledge required by the Learning Standards. Test development uses the empirical analyses of pretest and field test data to inform expert judgment to build the examinations. Technical reports addressing test validity are available. This paper presents a summary of the major validity considerations in the development of the Regents examinations in Comprehensive English and in Mathematics A.

Test Content

The extensive test development process (explained in an earlier School Executive's Bulletin article) makes use of the pretest and field test data to select items that exhibit the right level of difficulty, high levels of relationship to the test as a whole, freedom from bias, and fit of the statistical characteristics of the item with its probability of being answered correctly by students with various skill levels. Items that do not have these properties are eliminated before they become part of the examination.

Test Construct

Factor analyses of both field test and operational test data show that the Regents examinations each tested one major factor, which was the design to measure the standards. The construct remained the same from field test to operational test, as well, as revealed by item difficulty correlations.

The standard setting study conducted on field test data as described in an earlier School Executive's Bulletin, was supported by the item level data from the operational test administrations. The tests each divided the populations into those with sufficient knowledge and skills to achieve the Learning Standards and those who did not demonstrate knowledge and skills to achieve the Learning Standards.

At this point, the new generation of Regents examinations has demonstrated very sound psychometric properties. More technical information is available from the Office of State Assessment.