



ACET, Inc.

Action Consulting and Evaluation Team

Summer 2009 Newsletter

Issue 26

Dear Friends,

This year, ACET evaluated a number of social service programs that were implemented within school districts, charter schools, and community agencies. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in taking time to administer, record, and download data for the analysis. Classroom staff and school administrators have found the results critical in program planning and the improvement of services. We feel fortunate to be able to work in communities vested in social service programs that enrich the lives of students and families. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

ACET Team



Employee Spotlight: Joseph Curiel

This summer we are proud to highlight Joseph Curiel, M.A., our full-time Evaluation Specialist, and congratulate him on his one-year anniversary at ACET. Joseph grew up in a small town in Northern California and spent his undergraduate years on the West Coast at Humboldt

University where he earned a B.A. in philosophy. He later relocated to Houston and earned his Master's degree in Sociology. From there, ACET recruited Joseph for his excellent analytical and quantitative skills. His master's thesis involved an evaluation of a large urban school district's reading program where he followed multiple cohorts of students in the early grades to assess program impact. Since moving to Minnesota to join ACET, Joseph has worked on a wide variety of projects including a year-long evaluation of an early literacy program in three rural communities. The project included not only evaluating student achievement, but also measuring program fidelity and implementation. Joseph also took the lead in implementing ACET's newest technology –scannable surveys. This past spring, Joseph supervised the formatting and scanning of a student survey which was administered to thousands of students in 30 schools across the state. In his spare time, Joseph loves to stay active and enjoys biking, hiking, soccer, and walking with his dog. His other interests, besides research and evaluation, include philosophy, history, physics, and chess.



Interested in receiving less paper mail? If so, you can receive ACET's newsletter by email. To sign up, send an email to info@acetinc.com and we will switch you to an electronic newsletter.

Congratulations Stella!

Stella SiWan Zimmerman, President of ACET, Inc., has been selected as an honoree of the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal's* 2009 Minority Business Awards. Stella was nominated for recognition as one of the Twin Cities' top corporate executives. She is being honored for making a difference in her profession, business, and the community. Stella and nine others were chosen from a competitive field of nominees.

Stella will be profiled in the *Business Journal's* annual Minority Business publication coming out June 26. She will also be recognized at a reception on June 25 hosted by FOX 9 NEWS anchor Alix Kendall at the Metropolitan Ballroom. For more information on the feature or the reception, please visit the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* website at <http://twincities.bizjournals.com/twincities/event/5362>.

Brown Bag Seminars

ACET understands that the current economic climate makes it quite difficult for programs to include all desired elements of an evaluation into their evaluation budget. ACET has a very strong belief in helping programs build their own evaluation and research capacities. ACET is currently conducting an assessment to identify the need for free, brown bag seminars to help program staff build their own capacity and enhance their evaluation processes. We have identified two potential topics for fall: Data Collection 101 and Surveys 101. If you are interested in attending a brown bag seminar or would like to suggest a topic for a future seminar, please contact ACET's Brown Bag Seminar Coordinator, Heather Scholz, at heather@acetinc.com.

Why do we need to talk about Validity?

By ACET Staff and Tim Barry, ACET Winter Intern

Developing an understanding of validity does not have to be a frightening experience. In fact, it can be exciting for service providers and school staff to review their instruments through the “validity lens” as a means of better understanding their program and the instruments they are currently using. Rest assured, validity as it applies to surveys and instruments (tools we are all familiar with) is a simple and easy to understand concept. Validity is simply the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure – in other words, the accuracy of an instrument.

There are several different types of validity, and each provides slightly different information about the degree to which the instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure. To better illustrate these types of validity, we’ll use a hypothetical example of a new instrument that measures student satisfaction with after-school programs. Unlike other satisfaction instruments, this new, hypothetical After School Program Satisfaction instrument is general enough so that students in diverse programs (e.g., academic, athletic, enrichment, social) can report how satisfied they are with the programs in which they participate. Now let’s see how our hypothetical instrument demonstrates different kinds of validity.

Face validity is a judgment made by observers such as program managers and school staff as to whether or not an instrument measures what it is supposed to. If the items on the After School Program Satisfaction instrument look like they measure after-school program satisfaction, the instrument would be said to have high face validity. Although it is easy to make a judgment about face validity, it also has limited usefulness. After all, just because an instrument *looks* accurate does not necessarily mean that it *is* accurate!

In contrast, **content validity** is the degree to which an instrument measures the entire scope of a topic. In most cases, we are limited in the number and type of questions we can ask on an instrument. Content validity is a judgment about whether the questions which were chosen for an instrument reflect the breadth and depth of a field or program. For example, on the hypothetical After School Program Satisfaction instrument, were the questions chosen to measure the *whole program* or are some questions missing? If all of the items on the After School Program Satisfaction instrument were ratings for the time of day the program was offered, it is likely that the instrument would have low content validity because students were not asked their satisfaction with the space, program staff, materials available, and other important topics. Content validity is important because staff need to make sure that all facets of their program, event, or school are being measured. No special tools are needed to assess content validity, but it is important that staff verify that *all* elements of the program are assessed with the new instrument.

Both face validity and content validity are judgments made by a person about an instrument. In contrast, the remaining types of validity are based on correlations between scores on the instrument and other external events or scores. For **criterion related validity**, scores on an instrument would be correlated with an existing measure of skills or abilities. In our example, if students are highly satisfied with an after-school program, we might expect that students would also have high rates of attendance. In contrast, **construct validity** is the correlation between scores for similar or related instruments. For example, we would hope that scores on the After School Program Satisfaction instrument would be correlated with other program satisfaction measures. Criterion-related and construct validity are typically assessed by correlating instrument scores with other data or instruments.

Validity is an important topic for both educational programs and non-profit organizations because programs need to ensure that the instruments they use measure what they are supposed to measure!

Types of Validity Summarized

Type	Description
Face Validity	Does the instrument <i>look</i> like it measures what it’s supposed to?
Content Validity	Is the entire scope of the topic being measured? Is anything missing?
Criterion-Related Validity	Is the new instrument related to similar or related outcomes?
Construct Validity	Is the new instrument related to similar instruments?