

Leading with Equity: Engaging a Transformativist Methodology to Develop a Comprehensive and Contextual School-Based Screener

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There are no relationships to disclose.

Acknowledgments

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Today's Session



Understanding a transformativist approach to measure development

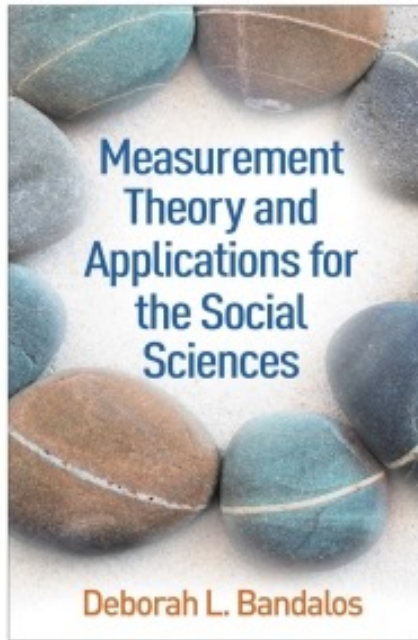


Project ESSY as an example of engaging a transformativist approach



Key findings in the development of the Project ESSY whole child screener

Traditional Measure Development



1. State the purpose of the scale
2. Identify and define domains
3. Determine item format
4. Create initial item pool
5. Conduct initial item review
6. Conduct a large-scale field test
7. Analyze and revise Items
8. Calculate reliability

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, not feasible for implementation, or even harmful (bias, stereotypes, etc.)



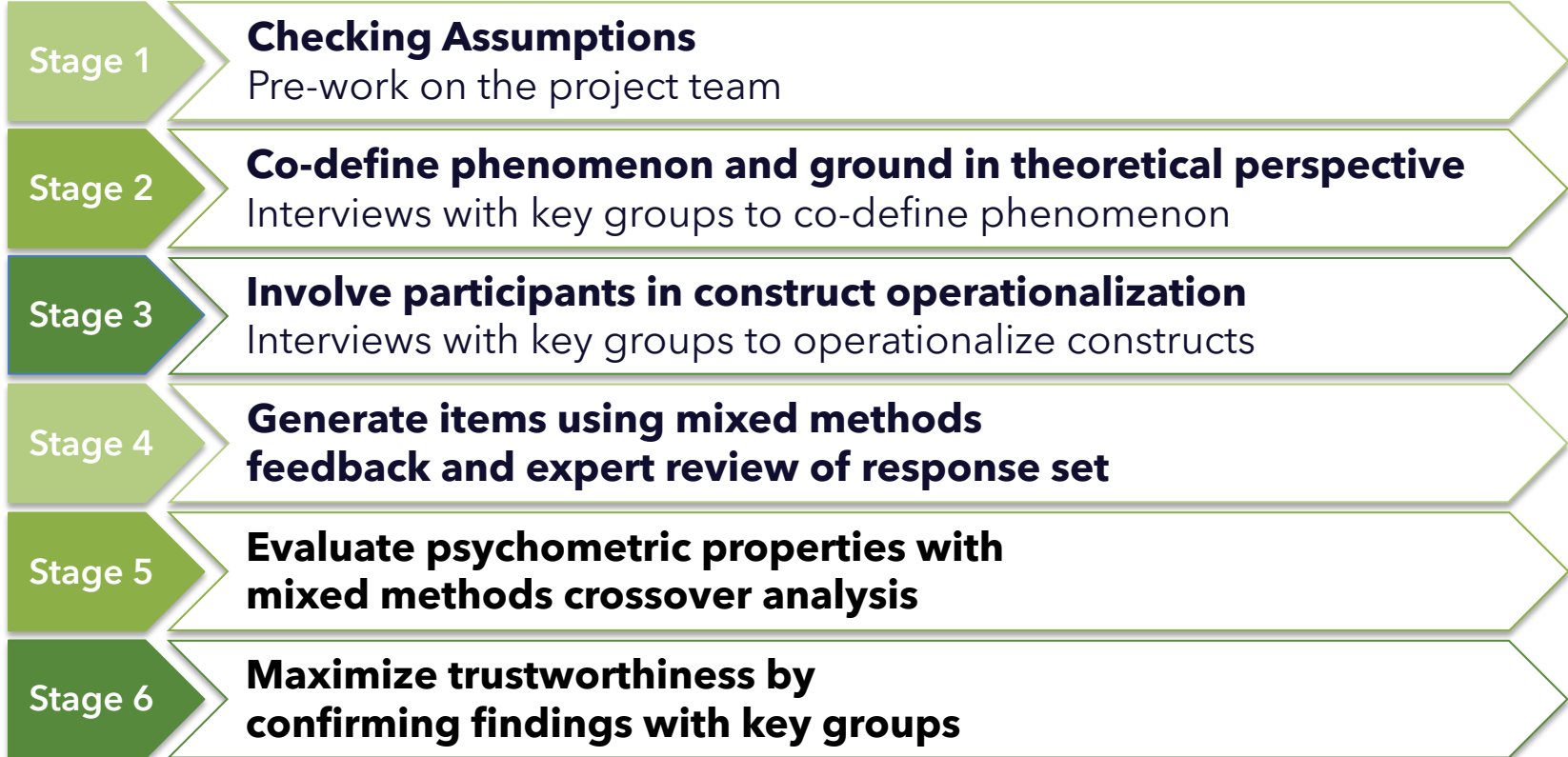
By the time end users can give feedback, it's too late - Measure has already been through validation process



Acting on, rather than with, communities

The Transformativist Approach

Sankofa (2022)



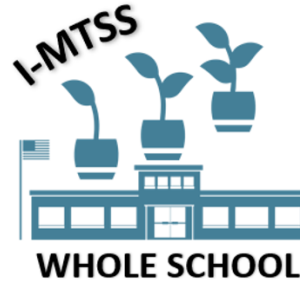
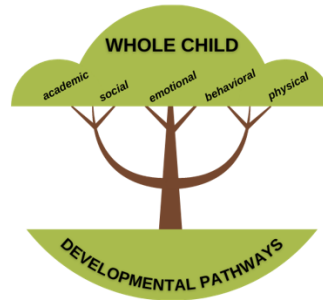
The Problem

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 develop and evaluate a comprehensive screener that incorporates **contextually relevant** information about the **whole child** and that addresses the **personal biases** of school staff.

Methods

Initial Drafting of Measure

ESSY Screener: STEP 1 (Broad Screen)

Academic core question

Social core question

Emotional core question

Behavioral core question

Physical health core question

Family status core question

Family process core question

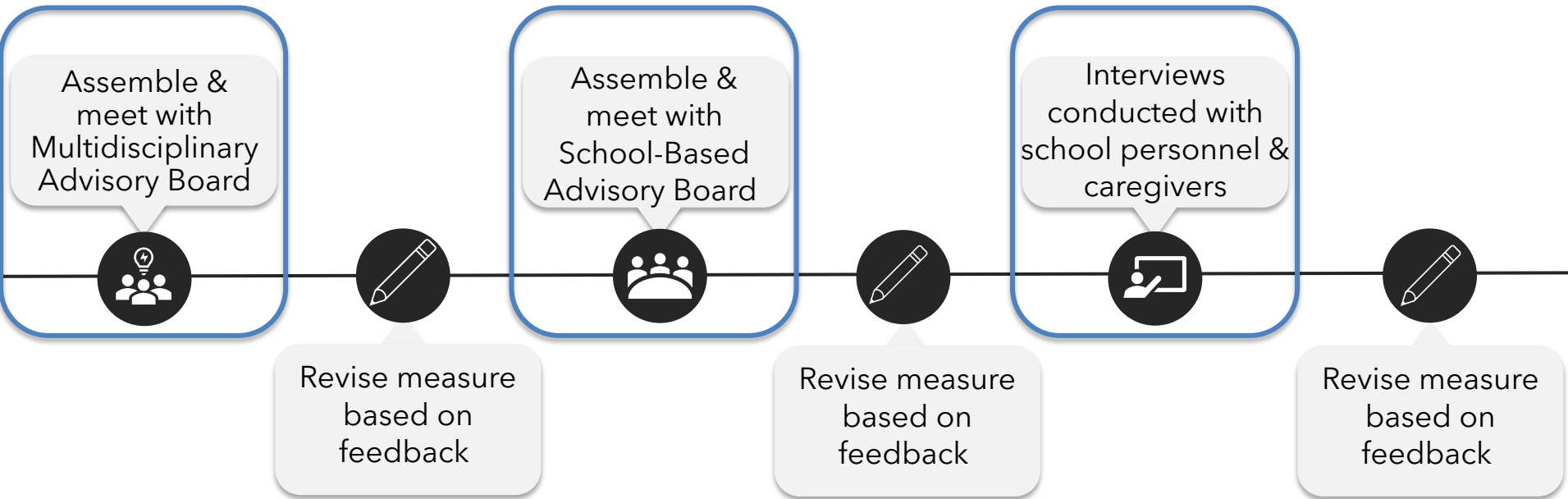


ESSY Screener: STEP 2 (Targeted Screen)

1. Does the student appear anxious (e.g., nervous, worried, tense, fearful)?
2. Does the student appear sad (e.g., feels unhappy, doesn't enjoy anything at all, cries a lot)?
3. Is the student socially withdrawn (e.g., is solitary, avoids peers, withdraws from peer activities)?
4. Does the student have high self-esteem (e.g., feels proud of self, thinks they have good qualities)?
5. Does the student have high self-efficacy (e.g., believes they can solve problems, handle things that come their way, can achieve goals)?
6. Does the student appear satisfied with their life (e.g., appearance, skills and talents, things they have)?

Do you have concerns regarding X?

Measure Iteration Process



Key Group: Multidisciplinary Advisory Board



Screening



Family &
community
partnerships



School health



Integrated
multi-tiered
systems of support



Anti-racist
assessment



Mental health



Measurement



Whole child
development



Trauma

Multidisciplinary Advisory Board Convening

1

Use of universal screening in schools

2

Potential of whole child screening

3

Various assessment formats

4

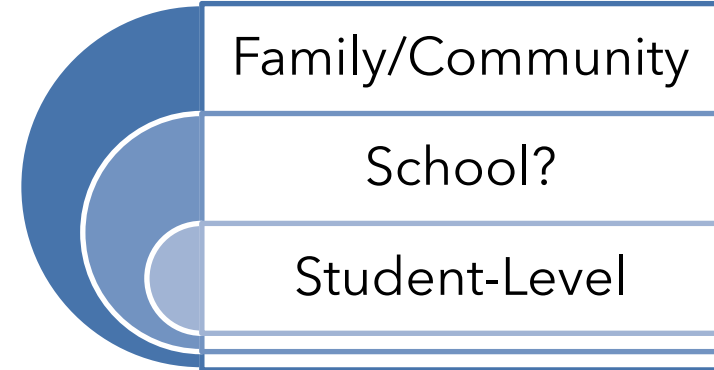
Feedback on within-child domains and items

5

Brainstorming of observable indicators of assets or barriers in the school and community environments

6

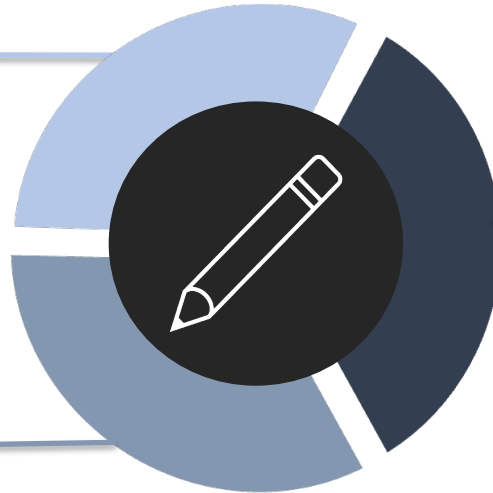
Discussion of adding domain related to school experiences



Measure Iteration #1

Analyzed verbal and written feedback

Two-way follow-up with some members regarding additional feedback



Refined measure before sharing it with the School-Based Advisory Board

Key Group: School-Based Advisory Board

Identifying Participants



Purposeful criterion sampling

Goals



Identifying participants:

- (a) in various roles
- (b) with varied experiences implementing universal screeners in schools

Participants



9 school-based participants:

- 6 district administrators
- 1 building principal
- 2 school psychologists

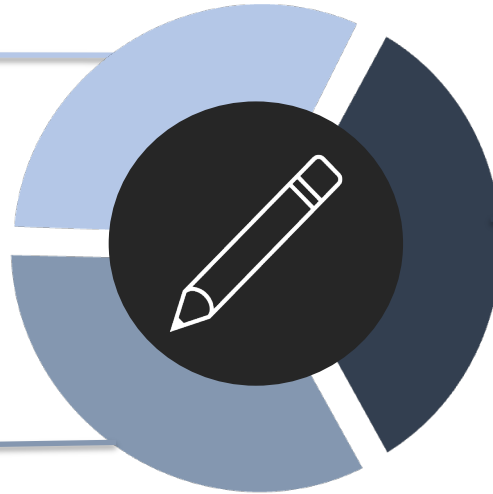
School-Based Advisory Board Convening

Universal screening across child domains	Expanding screening to consider the whole-child	Exploring multi-gated screening
<p>What does universal screening look like in your district?</p>	<p>Are all domains important to include?</p> <p>Are any domains missing?</p> <p>Can you assess these constructs?</p>	<p>Solicited feedback on two different options for multiple gating</p>

Measure Iteration #2

Analyzed verbal and written feedback

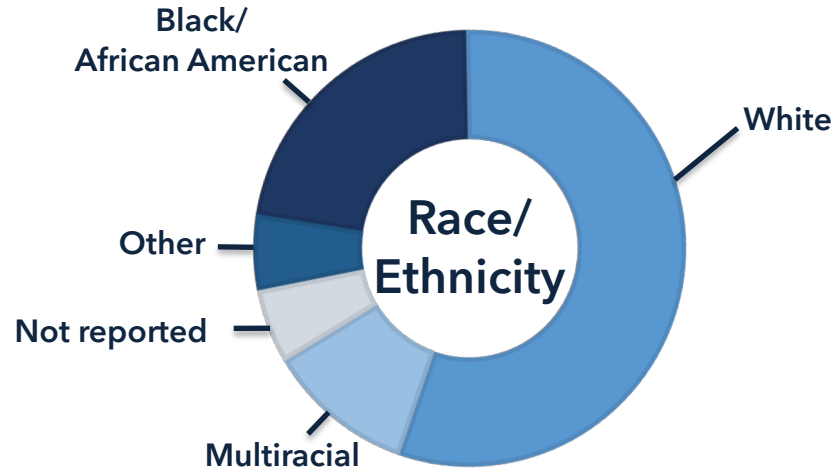
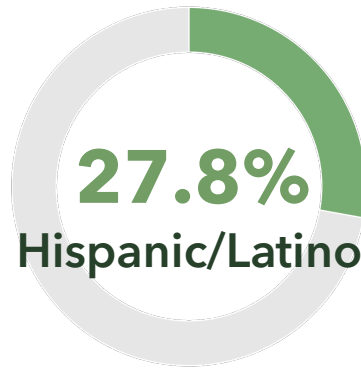
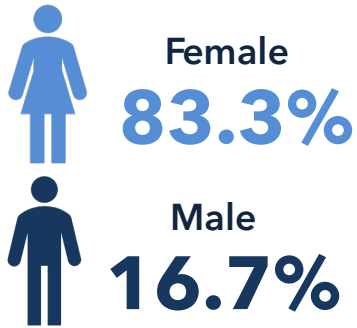
Two-way follow-up with some members regarding additional feedback



Refined measure before interviews

Interview Participant Demographics

Gender Identity



Role

3rd - 5th
grade teacher

22.2%

Administrator

16.7%

5.6%

School mental
health professional

11.1%

Family caregiver

44.4%

Family liaison

Interview Procedures

C3SS Screener: STEP 2 (Specific Level - Social Skills)

1. Student has friends/social connections (e.g., plays with friends, able to talk about things with others).
2. Student demonstrates social skills (e.g., sharing, cooperating, helping others, demonstrating empathy).
3. Student is accepted by peers (e.g., included by other children, well-liked by others, not picked on/bullied by others).
4. Student interacts appropriately with adults (e.g., included by adults, valued by adults).
5. Student is able to communicate with peers (e.g., has appropriate language skills, understood by peers).

- a) What are your reactions to these items?
- b) Are these relevant to a school setting?
- c) Are any items overly ethnocentric or could any induce bias or stereotyping?
- d) Can school personnel accurately report on these?
- e) Would these items capture students in need of support?
- f) How long to complete for 1 student?
- g) Are there any missing topics or items?

Interview Procedures

Additional questions

- Reactions to whole child screening, assessing for contextual assets and barriers in schools
- Recommendations for data reporting, interpretation, and use
- Positive or negative consequences that could result from the measure

Interviews were conducted via WebEx, lasted 52-101 minutes ($M = 70$ min), were audio recorded, and transcribed verbatim.

Thematic Analysis of Feedback

Research questions:

1. How do school personnel and family caregivers perceive the usability of the drafted screener?
2. How can the screener be improved?
3. How can implementation of the screener be strengthened?

Two coders
independently
completed reflexive
thematic analysis
(Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021)

Met weekly to
discuss data and
combine codes

Created project
maps to explore
relations between
themes

Used Usage
Rating Profile-
Assessment
framework of
usability

Measure Iteration #3



Used interview feedback
to refine measure for
pre-cognitive testing

Findings

Revision #1 Multidisciplinary Advisory Board



Informed by lit reviews & tech reports



Revised based on multi-disciplinary advisory board feedback

Contextual Conditions/Circumstances

Economic Stability	Health Care	Food	Physical Living Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enough money for basic needs• Adequate clothing, supplies• Caregiver unemployment• Consistent, stable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to necessary health care• Access to medications• Access high-quality health care• Access to culturally competent health care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to sufficient amount of food• Access to fruits and vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safe neighborhood• Access to reliable transportation• Home has problems with heat, bugs, leaks, etc.

All items were rewritten to be observable by a teacher.
For example:

1. The student shows up to school with adequate clothing. (e.g., clean, seasonally-appropriate, in good repair, non-repeating).
2. The student has sufficient school supplies.
3. The student requests or stores food to take home.

Revision #2 School-Based Advisory Board



Advisory board members felt strongly that student and caregiver report (i.e., additional informants) might be needed to accurately assess all included domains.



Specific items were flagged as potentially inducing bias.



Discussion focused on potential staff and caregiver concerns (e.g., time required to complete and privacy concerns) and message to alleviate some of these concerns.

Interview Themes

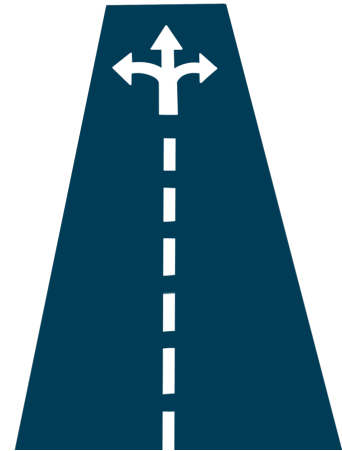
Paving the Road
for Usability



Potential Roadblocks
to Usability



Recommended
Paths Forward



Paving the Road for Usability

- Alignment with existing initiatives
- Comprehensive yet efficient design
- Perceived benefits of assessing the whole child



Paving the Road for Usability

"We're not only supporting the academic side, but we're also addressing barriers that families face, whether it's food, homelessness, any number of barriers. [...] We address all those questions on a daily basis with families."

-District Administrator




"It's seeing that human as a whole child: physical needs, social emotional needs, what are the needs of their family, and tapping into those different aspects that make the child."

-Teacher

Potential Roadblocks



Potential Roadblocks



Family reactions to contextual screening questions

“I think for a lot of our students, if a parent is asked whether their kid is hungry or not, they might feel like they're not doing their job as a parent, that they're not providing for their family.”

-School psychologist

“I'd hate to use the screener, and then isolate families, because they feel like, 'Gee, the teachers are saying that I'm a failure, a failing parent because I don't communicate or I'm a failing parent because of that.'”

-District administrator

Recommended Paths Forward

Optimizing
Instrumentation and Data
Collection Procedures

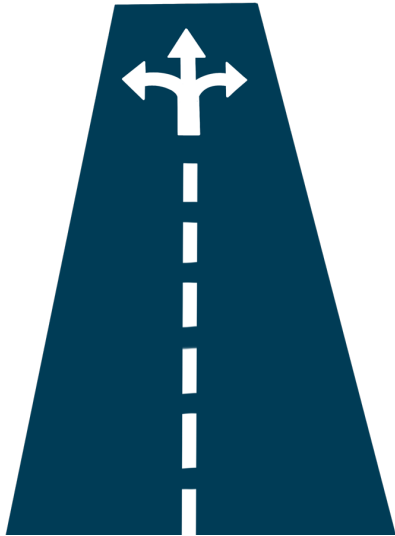
Clear and specific
messaging with staff & families

Strengthening Connections to
Data Interpretation and Use



Recommended Paths Forward

Clear and specific
messaging to
staff & families



“When teachers and educators take the time to say, ‘We're here to help, and it's not anything that you've done wrong, and we really want to help your kids be as successful as possible.’ I think that that helps take the edge off, and really helps parents to be able to not only educate them, but also educate the kids.”

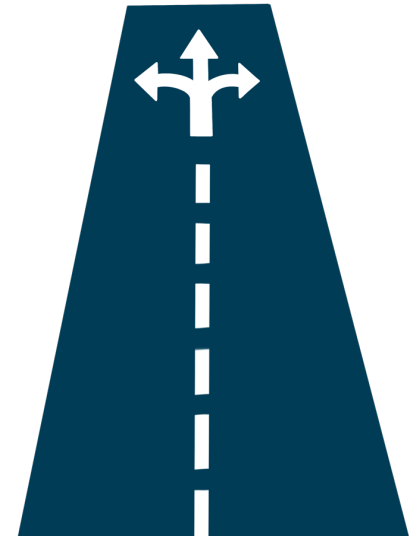
-Family caregiver

Recommended Paths Forward

"I wonder if there should be a question, 'does this child have any diagnoses you're aware of?' That could affect behavior and social skills. If you say they have poor social skills and behaviors, but you know they have a diagnosis, then you could go from there."

-Family caregiver

**Optimizing
Instrumentation and Data
Collection Procedures**



Recommended Paths Forward

Optimizing
Instrumentation and Data
Collection Procedures

Clear and specific
messaging to staff & families

Strengthening Connections to
Data Interpretation and Use



Roadblocks & Paths Forward

Suggested Paths Forward to Maximize Usability

	Clear and Precise Messaging		Optimizing instrumentation and data collection procedures			Strengthening connection to data interpretation and use	
	With staff	With families	Revising specific items	Faculty and staff training	Multi-informant approach	Usability of data report	Mapping to appropriate supports
Faculty and staff buy-in	Green	White	White	Green	White	White	Green
Family comfort with contextual screening items	White	Green	Green	White	Green	White	Green
Teacher rating accuracy	Green	White	Green	Green	Green	White	White
School capacity to provide indicated supports	White	White	White	White	White	Green	Green

Potential Roadblocks to Usability

Revision #3 - Sample Revisions

Revising or removing specific words:
*aggressive, malicious intent,
overactive behaviors, risky rule
breaking behavior, excessive talking*

Adding items regarding
IEP, ELL disability/chronic
health condition status



"Access to basic needs"



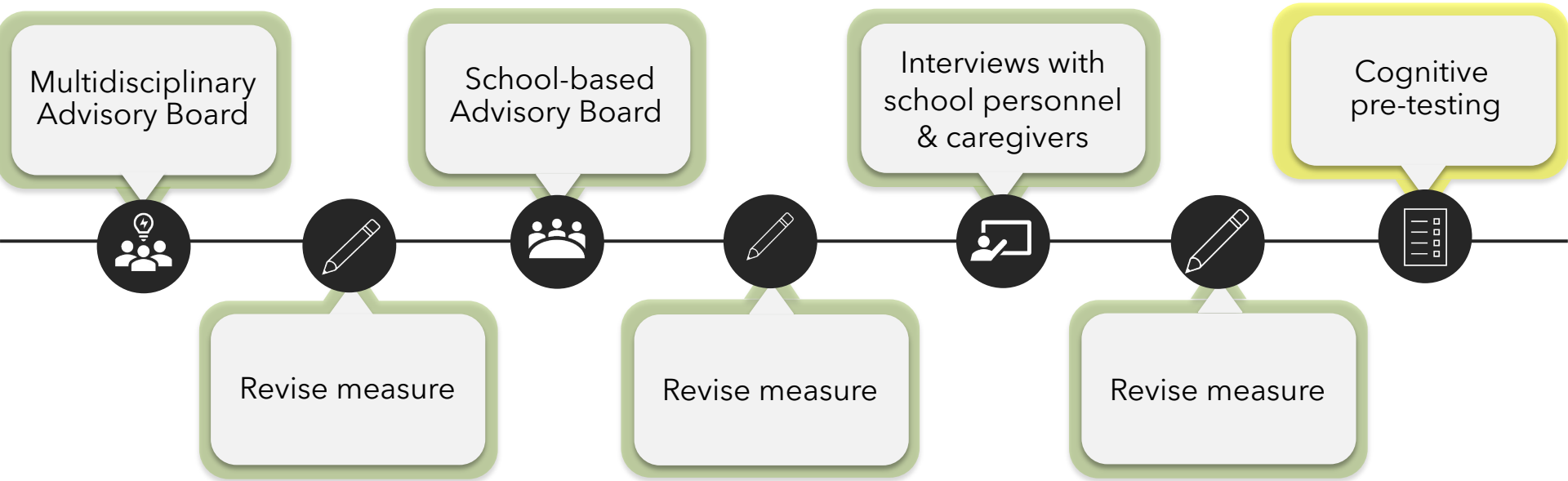
"Access to material needs"

Living with relatives



Experiencing housing instability

Measure Iteration Process



Discussion

Key Takeaways



A transformivist approach to measure development (Sankofa, 2022) includes key groups from the outset of measure development



To date, Project ESSY has engaged in 3 rounds of data collection and measure iteration to improve the usability of the measure

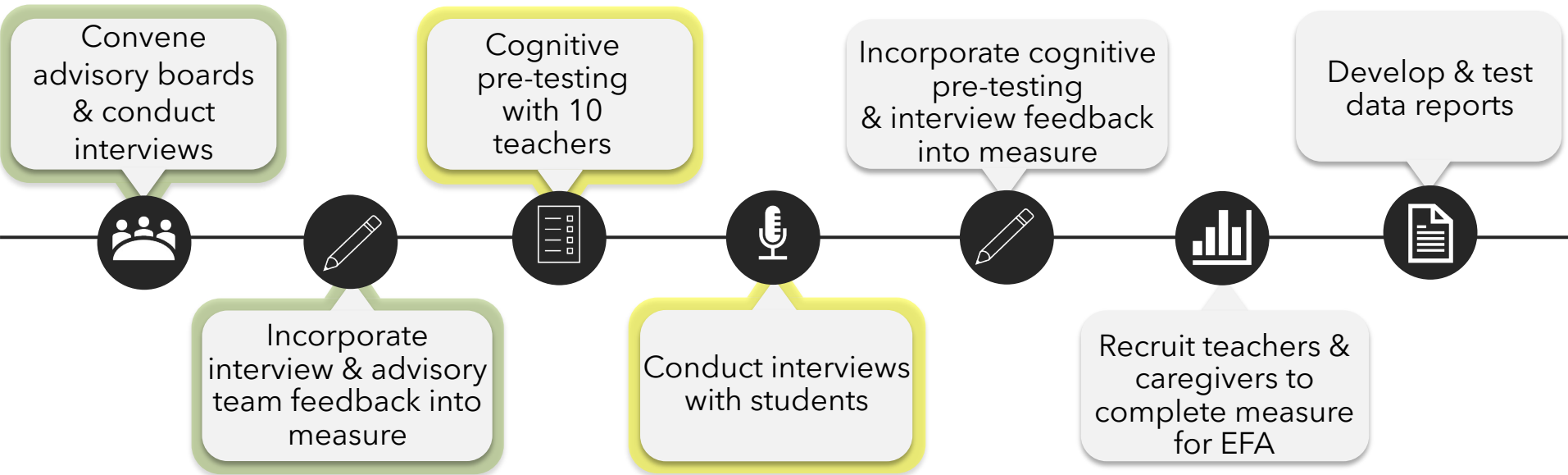


This approach promotes equity by including the perspectives of key groups in defining constructs, developing and evaluating items, and discussing potential consequences of measure use

Cumulative input from key groups



Next Steps



Limitations

Interviews
conducted with
a convenience
sample

Interview
participants
were all based
in Northeast
U.S. school
districts

Only an
assessment of
perceived
usability

Future Directions

Evaluate teacher accuracy and/or need for additional informants

Determine if and how contextual questions can be asked

Develop and test structures for data reporting & use

Assess usability of measure in practice

Questions





Conference Evaluation



Throughout the conference, when you see a QR code, simply open your phone camera and point it at the code.

Your camera automatically recognizes the QR code and will prompt you to visit the link!

Scan the QR to complete the evaluation for this session.



Equitable Screening to Support Youth

Thank you!

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<https://equitable-school-screening.education.uconn.edu/>