Leading with Equity: Developing an Equitable Social, Emotional, Behavioral Screener

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Presenter Disclosure

2024 National Association of School Psychologists Annual Conference
There are no relationships to disclose.

Acknowledgments

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Today's Session

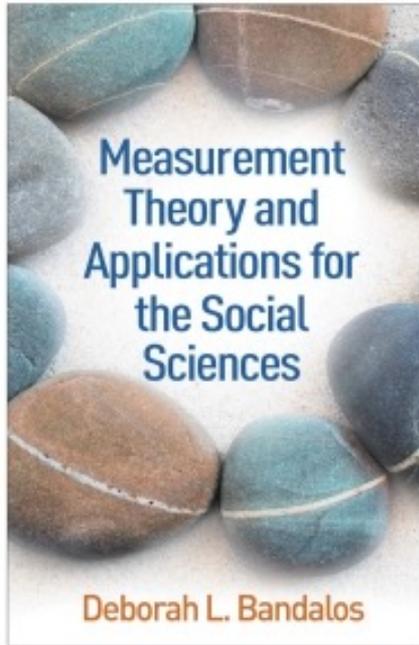Understanding a transformativist approach to measure development

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

Measurement Theory and Applications for the Social Sciences

Deborah L. Bandalos

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
9. Conduct validation studies

An Overlooked Source of Validity Evidence

Consequential validity is the

intended and unintended positive and negative consequences of testing –

how test scores are used in the real world

(Messick, 1998)

- Absent from the research literature (Cizek et al., 2010)
- Difficult to quantify and costly to collect

Shortcomings of Traditional Measure Development Approach

Project ESSY

Voices of those who will use the measure, or those affected by measure use, are not included

Measures might be irrelevant, not feasibly implemented, or have harmful consequences (bias, disproportionality, etc.)
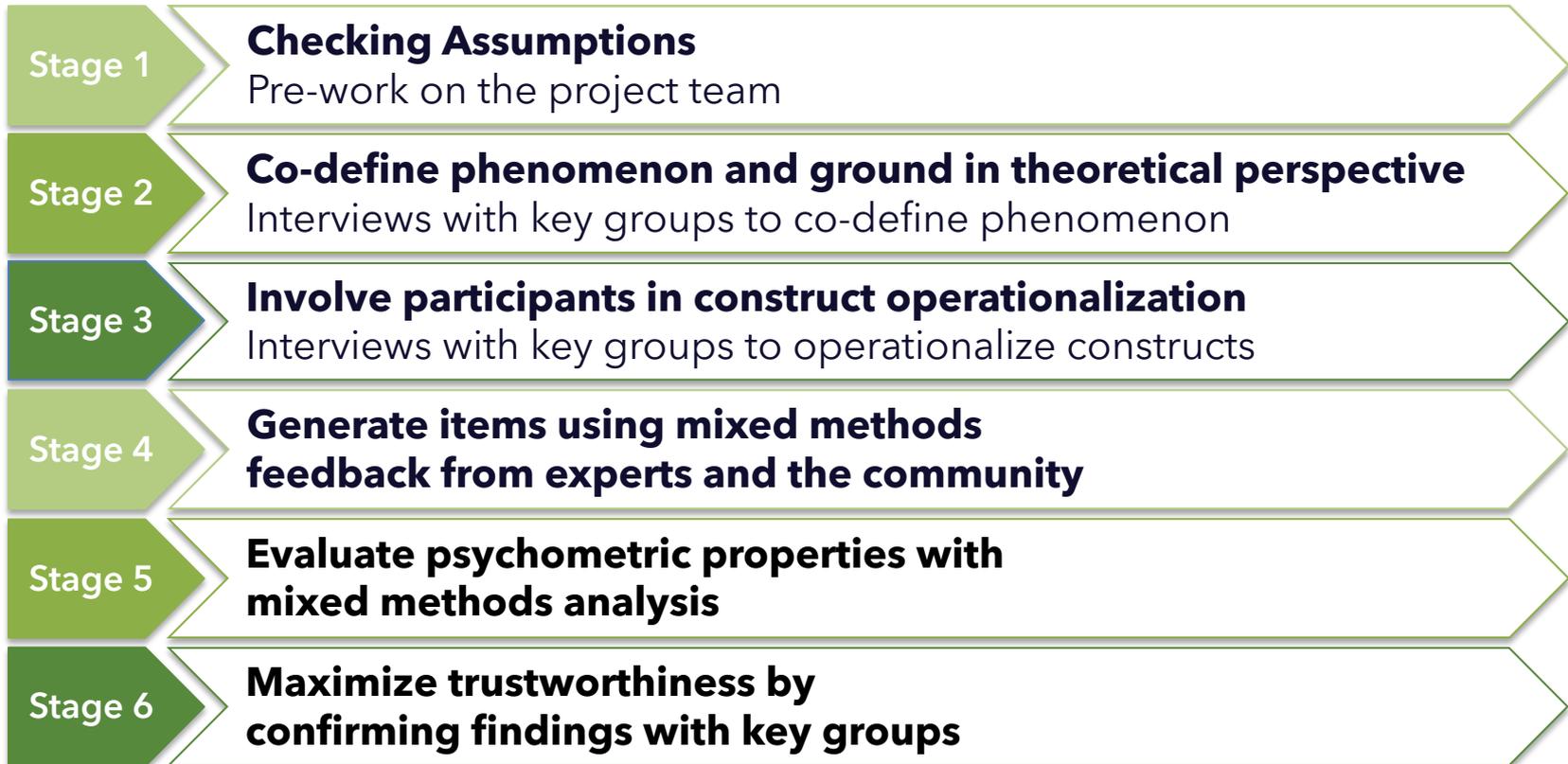
By the time end users can give feedback, it's too late – Measure has already been through validation process

Acting on, rather than with, communities
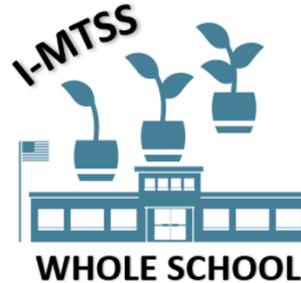
The Transformativist Approach

Sankofa (2022)

Project ESSY

Stage 1
Checking Assumptions
Pre-work on the project team

Stage 2
Co-define phenomenon and ground in theoretical perspective
Interviews with key groups to co-define phenomenon

Stage 3
Involve participants in construct operationalization
Interviews with key groups to operationalize constructs

Stage 4
Generate items using mixed methods feedback from experts and the community

Stage 5
Evaluate psychometric properties with mixed methods analysis

Stage 6
Maximize trustworthiness by confirming findings with key groups

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

UCONN

Initial Drafting of Measure

Project
ESSY

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
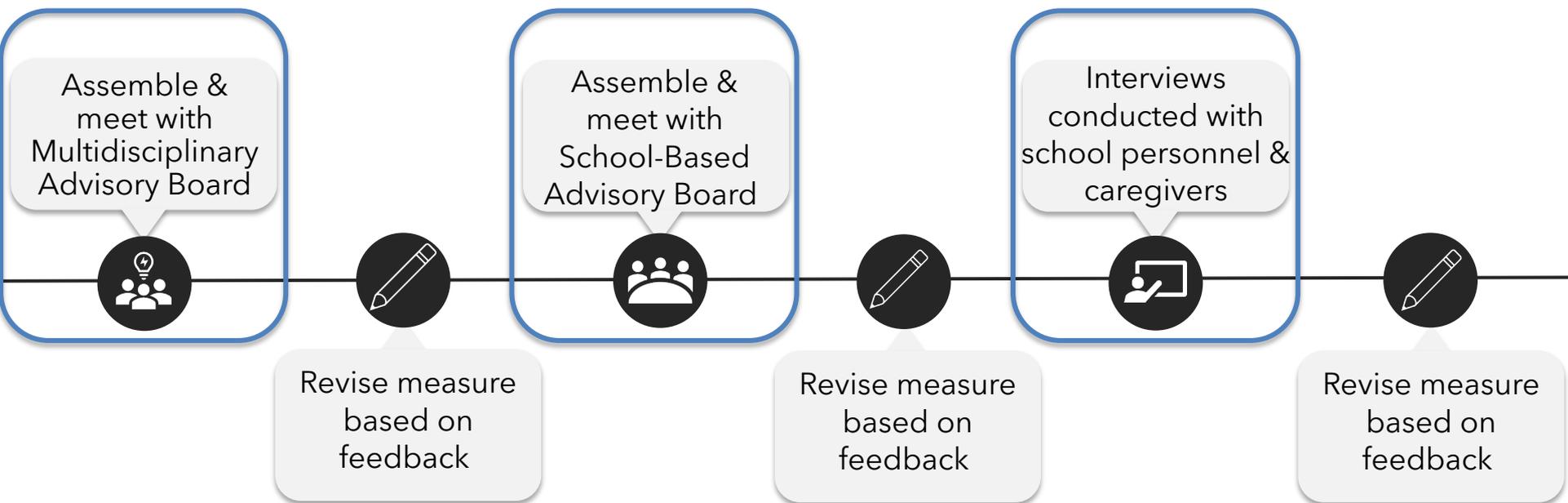
Family process core question

Do you have concerns regarding X?

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)?

Measure Iteration Process

Project ESSY

Assemble & meet with Multidisciplinary Advisory Board

Revise measure based on feedback

Assemble & meet with School-Based Advisory Board

Revise measure based on feedback

Interviews conducted with school personnel & caregivers

Revise measure based on feedback

Key Group: Multidisciplinary Advisory Board

Project ESSY

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
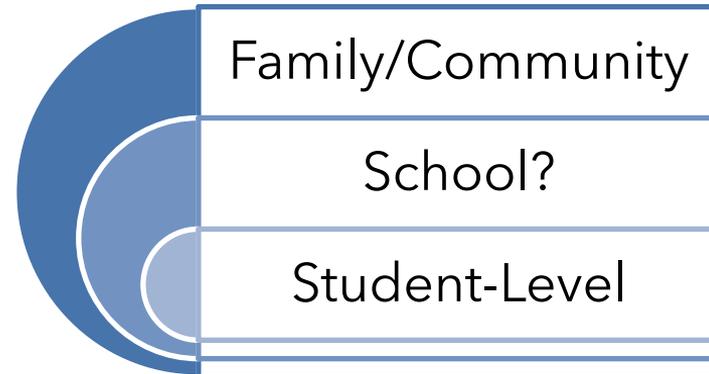
3 Various assessment formats

4 Feedback on within-child domains and items

5 Brainstorming of observable indicators of assets or barriers in the school and community environments
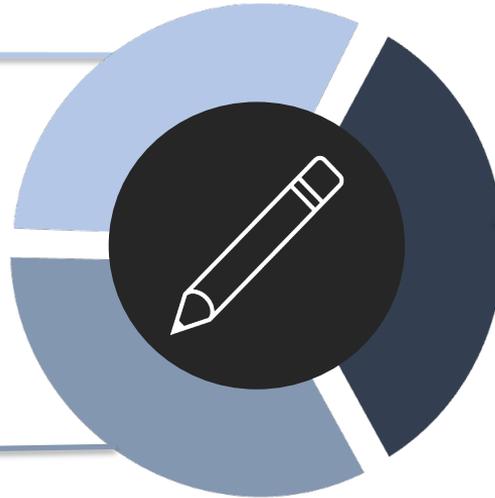
6 Discussion of adding domain related to school experiences

Family/Community

School?

Student-Level

Measure Iteration #1

Project ESSY

Analyzed verbal and written feedback

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

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

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
What does universal screening look like in your district?	Are all domains important to include? Are any domains missing? Can you assess these constructs?	Solicited feedback on two different options for multiple gating

Measure Iteration #2

Analyzed verbal and written feedback
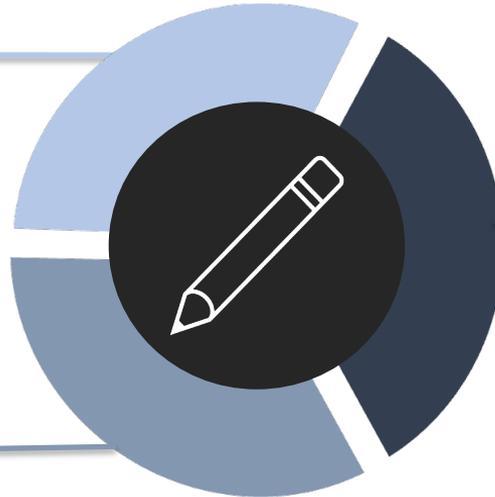
Refined measure before interviews

Two-way follow-up with some members regarding additional feedback
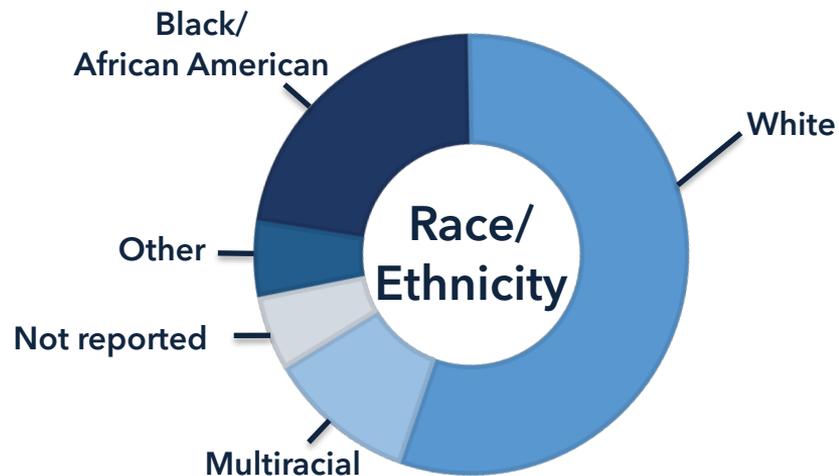
Interview Participant Demographics

Gender Identity

Female
83.3%

Male
16.7%
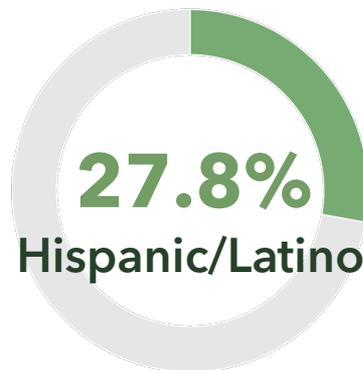
27.8%
Hispanic/Latino

Race/Ethnicity

Black/
African American

White

Other

Not reported

Multiracial

Role

3rd – 5th grade teacher	Administrator	Family liaison	School mental health professional	Family caregiver
22.2%	16.7%	5.6%	11.1%	44.4%

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

Contextual Conditions/Circumstances

Economic Stability	Health Care	Food	Physical Living Environment
• Enough money for basic needs • Adequate clothing, supplies • Caregiver unemployment • Consistent, stable housing	• Access to necessary health care • Access to medications • Access high-quality health care • Access to culturally competent health care	• Access to sufficient amount of food • Access to fruits and vegetables	• Safe neighborhood • Access to reliable transportation • Home has problems with heat, bugs, leaks, etc.

Revised based on multi-disciplinary advisory board feedback

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

Project ESSY

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 messages to alleviate some of these concerns.
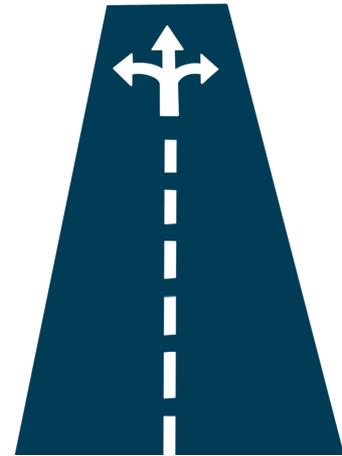
Revision #3: Interview Themes

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

"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

Potential Roadblocks

Project ESSY

Staff buy-in?

Family reactions to contextual screening questions

Teacher rating accuracy?

Can supports be provided?

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.'"
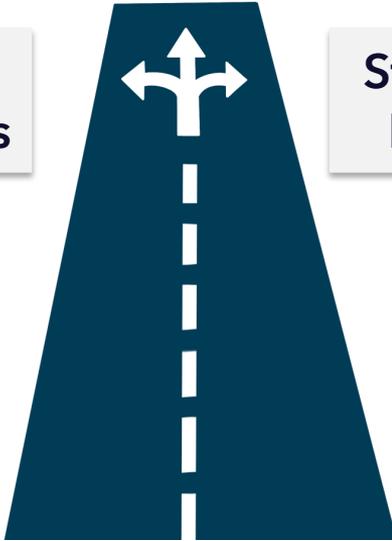**-District administrator**

Recommended Paths Forward

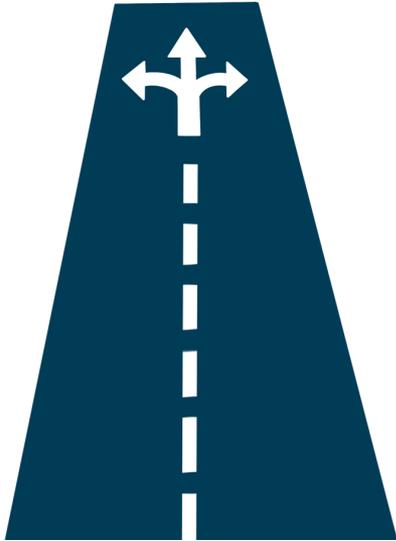Optimizing Instrumentation and Data Collection Procedures

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

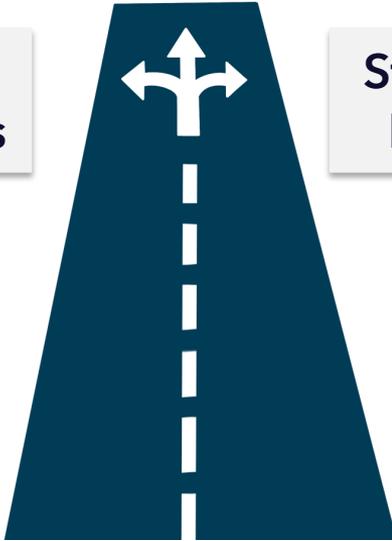**Optimizing Instrumentation and Data Collection Procedures**
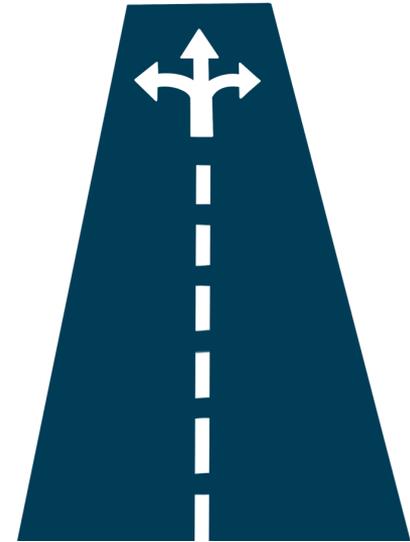
Recommended Paths Forward

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

Potential Roadblocks to 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	✅			✅			✅
Family comfort with contextual screening items		✅	✅		✅		✅
Teacher rating accuracy	✅		✅	✅	✅		
School capacity to provide indicated supports						✅	✅

Revision #3 – Sample Revisions

Project ESSY

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

Discussion

Key Takeaways

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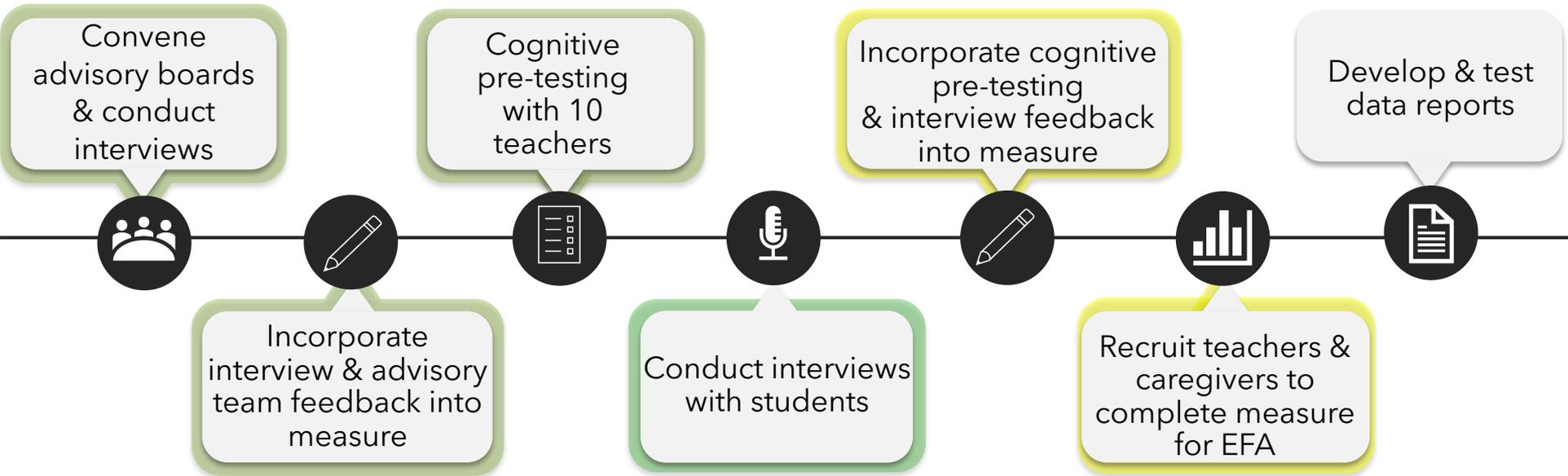
This approach promotes equity by including the perspectives of key groups in defining constructs, developing and evaluating items, and discussing potential consequences of measure use

Next Steps

Project ESSY

Convene advisory boards & conduct interviews

Incorporate interview & advisory team feedback into measure

Cognitive pre-testing with 10 teachers

Conduct interviews with students

Incorporate cognitive pre-testing & interview feedback into measure

Recruit teachers & caregivers to complete measure for EFA

Develop & test data reports

Limitations

Interviews conducted with a convenience sample

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

Only an assessment of <u>perceived</u> 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 and Comments

Thank you!

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