

scores in relation to the particular use (that is, decision) to which those scores will be put; (2) come up with propositions that must be supported if those intended interpretations are going to be accurate; (3) collect as much relevant evidence as is practical bearing on those propositions; and (4) synthesize the whole works in a convincing validity argument showing that score-based interpretations are likely to be accurate. Sure, it is easier said than done. But now you can see that when the exotic nomenclature of psychometrics is expunged, the what needs to be done is really not all that intimidating.

Decision Time

Group-Influenced Grading

A junior high school English teacher, Cecilia Celina, has recently installed cooperative learning groups in all five of her classes. The groups are organized so that, although there are individual grades earned by students based on each student's specific accomplishments, there is also a group-based grade that is dependent on the average performance of a student's group. Cecilia decides that 60 percent of a student's grade will be based on the student's individual effort and 40 percent of the student's grade will be based on the collective efforts of the student's group. She uses this 60–40 split when she grades students' written examinations, as well as when she grades a group's oral presentation to the rest of the class.

Several of Cecilia's fellow teachers have been interested in her use of cooperative learning because

they are considering employing such an approach in their own classes. One of those teachers, Fred Florie, is uncomfortable about Cecilia's 60–40 split of grading weights. Fred believes that Cecilia cannot arrive at a valid estimate of an individual student's accomplishment when 40 percent of the student's grade is based on the efforts of other students. Cecilia responds that this aggregated grading practice is one of the key features of cooperative learning, because it is the contribution of the group grade that motivates the students in a group to help each other learn. In most of her groups, for example, she finds that students willingly help other group members prepare for important examinations.

As she considers Fred's concerns, Cecilia concludes that he is most troubled about the validity of the inferences she makes about her students'