Multiple-Mark Items: An Alternative Objective Item Format?

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This study examined four threats to the validity of an alternative objective item format, the multiple-mark format. This format uses a multiple-choice item format and directs students to mark correct alternatives and leave blank incorrect alternatives. The multiple-mark format was used on the Kansas Reading and Mathematics Assessments at three grade levels. The four validity threats studied were students understanding directions, students omitting responses, dependency among item alternatives, and student guessing. The results indicated that over 95% of students followed multiple-mark directions and fewer than 1% omitted multiple-mark items. Reliability results showed some dependency among alternatives. As a result, it was recommended that scoring occur at the item level for multiple-mark items. In regard to guessing, it appeared that when students guessed, they chose to leave an alternative blank rather than mark it. Overall, the reliability and validity coefficients showed that the multiple-mark format has promise as an alternative objective format that is aligned with new curricular standards.