"Avoid the paralysis of the grand plan"
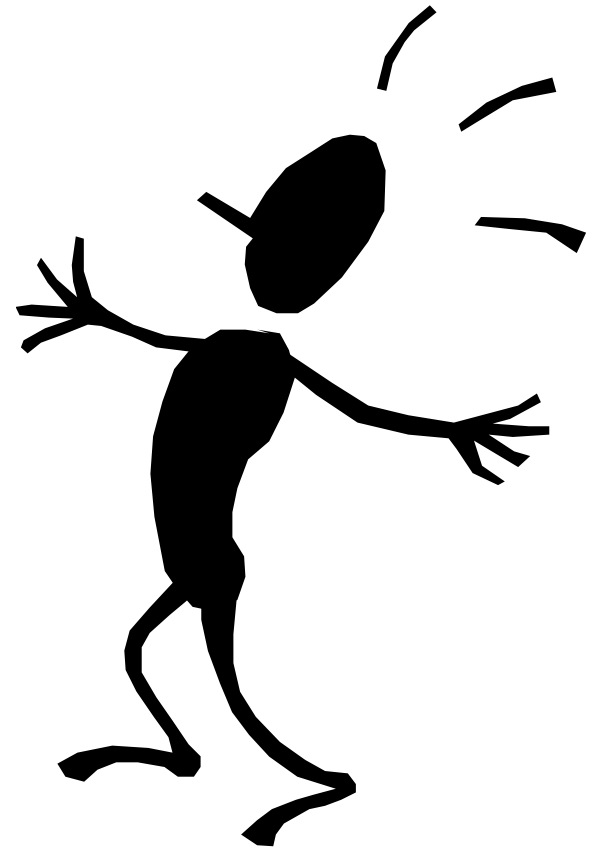
Stage and Manning (2003), p. 186
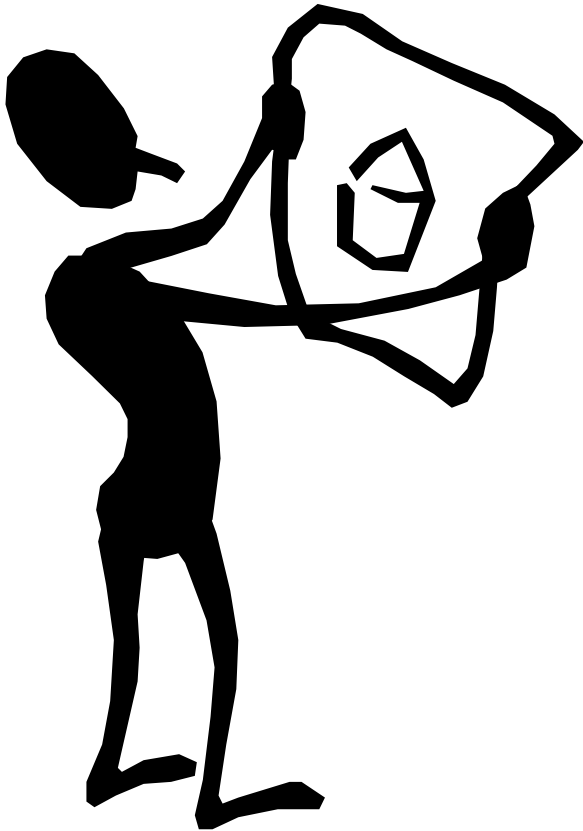
Beginning with the End in Mind: Choosing Outcomes and Methods

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Goals of this session:

- Understand the importance of assessment goals/objectives
- Define key terms related to methods
- Explain different types of assessment
- Determine key factors in choosing methods

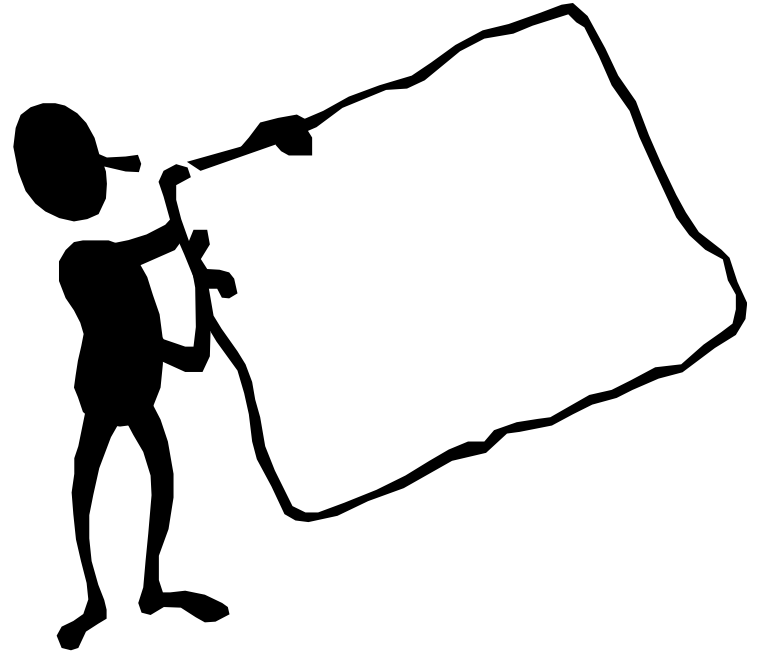# OUTCOMES

Begin with the end in mind…

Key questions to ask:

- Why are you doing this assessment?

- What do you hope to learn from doing the assessment?

- Who is your audience for you assessment results?

- Does that audience like numbers, stories, or both?

Time to think…..answer these questions as best you can for your project.

Start with the "Why" and "What"

- Learning Outcomes
- Program Outcomes
- Goals or sub-goals
- Objectives
- Questions

An outcome is the desired effect of a service or intervention, but is much more specific than a goal. It is participant or output centered.

Good Outcome Statements

Translate intentions into actions

Describe what participants should demonstrate or produce

Use action verbs

Align with other intentions (institutional, departmental)

Map to practices

Are collaboratively authored

Reflect/complement existing national criteria

Are measureable

Maki, P. L. (2004). *Assessing for learning: Building a sustainable commitment across the institution.*

SMART Outcomes

Specific: Clear and definite terms describing expected abilities, knowledge, values, attitudes, and performance

Measurable: It is feasible to get the data, data are accurate and reliable, it can be assessed more than one way

Aggressive but **A**ttainable: Consider stretch targets to improve program

SMART Outcomes

**R**esults-oriented: Describe what standards are expected of students

Time-bound: Describe where you would like to be within a specified period of time

Adapted from Paula Krist, Director of Operational Effectiveness and Assessment Support, University of Central Florida, May 2006.

If you're not sure, this may help....

Some things to think about:

- What causes it?
- Who is especially involved in it?
- When does it occur?
- What effects does it have?
- What types are there?
- How do various groups perceive it?
- In what stages does it occur?
- What will make it better?
- What makes it effective?
- What relationship does it have to other phenomena?
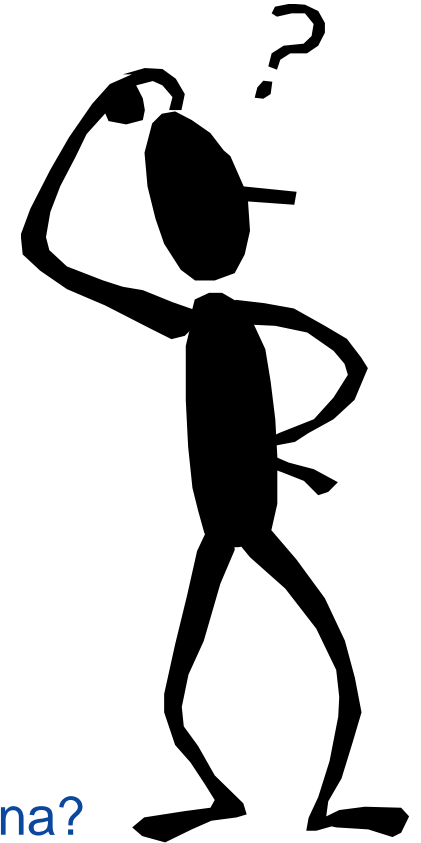
Clues to Help You Find a Direction:

Usage Numbers – tracks participation in programs or services

Student needs - keeps you aware of student body or specific populations

Student satisfaction/Perceptions – Level of satisfaction with or percept of campus

Learning Outcomes – show a specific program is meeting objectives (Blooms Taxonomy)

Clues to Help You Find a Direction:

Cost Effectiveness – how does a program/service being offered compare with cost

Comparable (Benchmarking) - Comparing a program/service against a comparison group
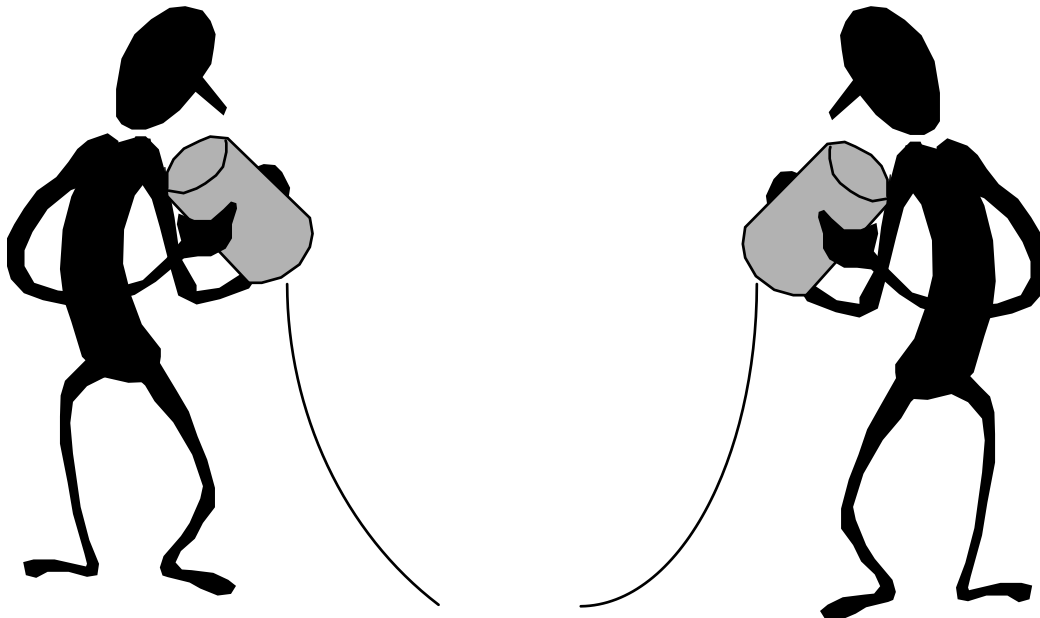
Using National Standards (i.e. CAS) – Comparing a program/service with a set of pre-established standards

Campus Climate or Environment – assess the behaviors/attitudes on campus

Time to share

Feedback on outcomes is key

- Avoid paralysis of too much wordsmithing
- Share to get ideas with the goal that everyone understands

CHOOSING YOUR METHODS

Choosing Your Method:

Matches: Measure directly matches to the outcome it is trying to measure

Appropriate methods: Uses appropriate direct and indirect methods

Targets: Indicates desired level of performance

Useful: Measures help identify what to improve

Reliable: Based on tested, known methods

Effective and Efficient:

Characterize the outcome concisely

Consider These Key Factors:

- What tools are in your toolbox?

- What are the strengths/challenges of each tool?

- What is your timeline?

- What resources (time, $$, people) do you have?

- Is there potential for collaboration?

- Does the data already exist?

- What politics are involved? (internal vs. external method)

- Who is your audience and what type of data would they find useful? (Quantitative vs. Qualitative)

- Do you need indirect or direct measures?

- Do you need formative or summative data? Or both?

What type of data do you need?

Quantitative

- Focus on numbers/numeric values
- Easier to report and analyze
- Can generalize to greater population with larger samples
- Less influenced by social desirability
- Sometimes less time, money
- Match with outcomes about knowledge and comprehension (define, classify, recall, recognize)
- Examples of Quantitative methods:
    - Survey
    - Usage numbers
    - Rubrics (if assigning #'s)
    - Tracking numbers

Qualitative

- Focus on text/narrative from respondents
- More depth/robustness
- Ability to capture "elusive" evidence of student learning and development
- Specific sample
- Match with outcomes about application, analysis, synthesis, evaluate
- Examples of Qualitative methods:
    - Interview
    - Focus Group
    - Portfolios
    - Rubrics (if descriptive)
    - Photo Journaling

Direct vs. Indirect Methods

Direct Methods - Any process employed to gather data which requires students to <u>display</u> their knowledge, behavior, or thought processes.

Indirect Methods - Any process employed to gather data which asks students to <u>reflect upon </u>their knowledge, behaviors, or thought processes.

Example: Direct vs. Indirect

INDIRECT: Please rate your level of agreement with the following….

I know of resources on campus to consult if I have questions about which courses to register for in the fall.

Strongly agree

Moderately agree

Moderately disagree

Strongly disagree

DIRECT: *Where on campus would you go or who would you consult with if you had questions about which courses to register for the fall?*

Open text field

Formative vs. Summative

Formative Assessments:

- Conducted during the program
- Purpose is to provide feedback
- Use to shape, modify or improve program

Summative Assessment:

- Conducted after the program
- Makes judgment on quality, worth, or compares to standard
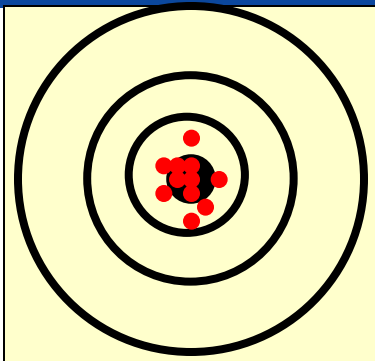- Can be incorporated into future plans

Validity and Reliability
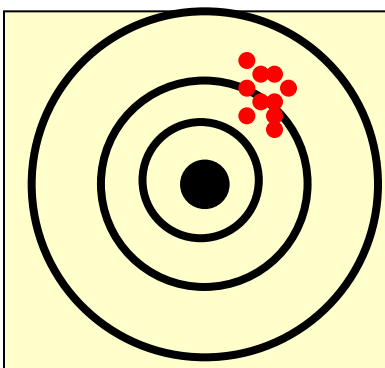
The Questions on the Test or Instrument
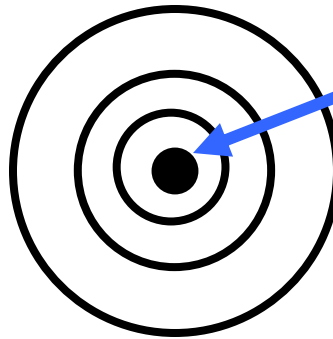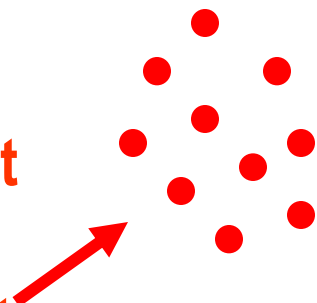
The "thing" we are trying to measure

Results are reliable. ☺
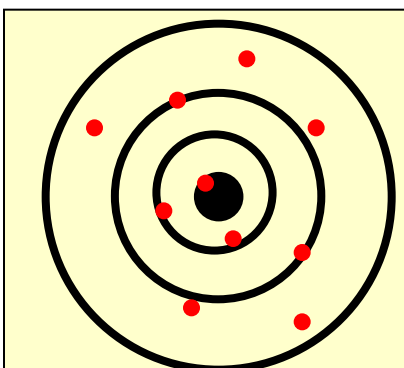
Results are valid. ☺

Results are reliable. ☺
Results are NOT valid. ☹
We're consistently measuring something, but what is it?

***Can* have reliability without validity!**

Results are NOT reliable. ☹
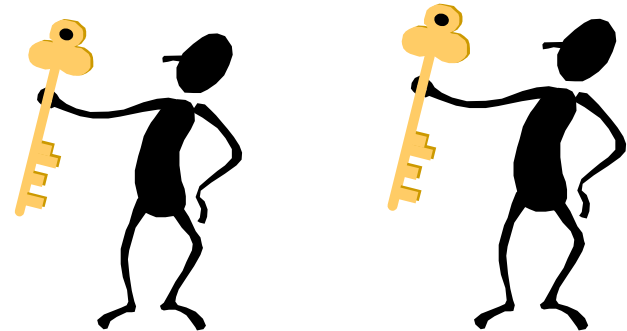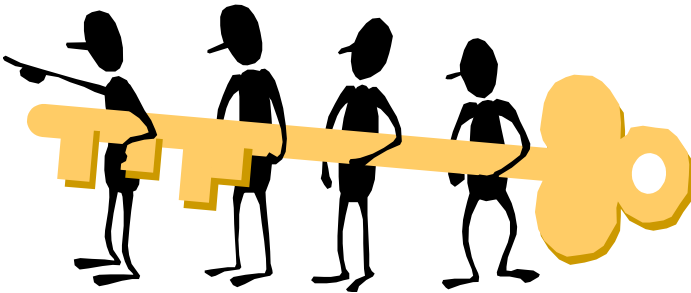
Results are NOT valid. ☹

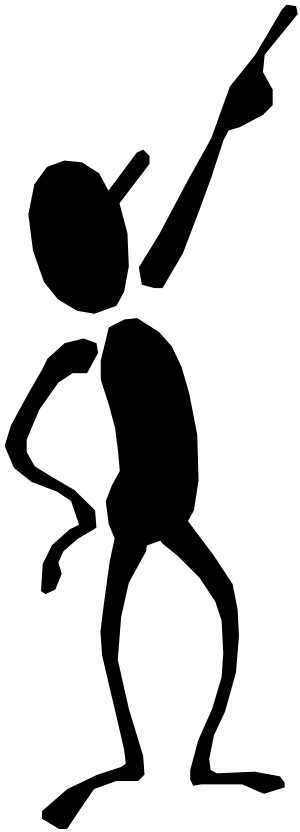# Who are you assessing?

Population:

The whole group

Sample:

A subsection of that group

Need more information: email me
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Tips to Choosing Methods:

- Build up your assessment toolbox and know your options

- Assessment is to inform practice (KISS),

- Start off small (especially if resistent)

- Too much data can slow you down

- Assessment is an ongoing process. Reflect on process/results, don't be afraid to change

- Read literature/attend conferences through a new lens

- Talk and get feedback

- Ask questions
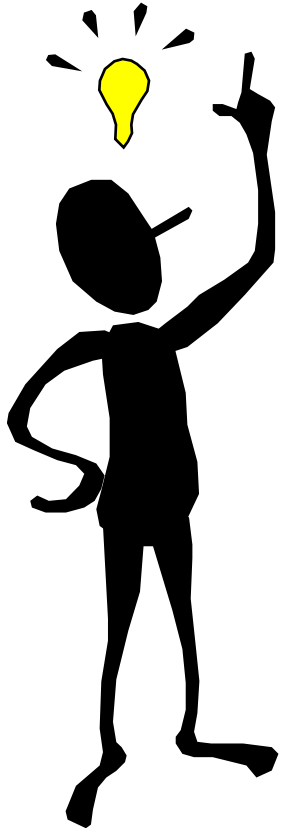
- Always ask if the data already exists
- Include stakeholders from the beginning, use external sources as needed
- Start with the ideal design, then work backwards to what is possible
- Decide what you will accept as sufficient evidence, but keep your audience in mind
- Always interpret your results in light of your design
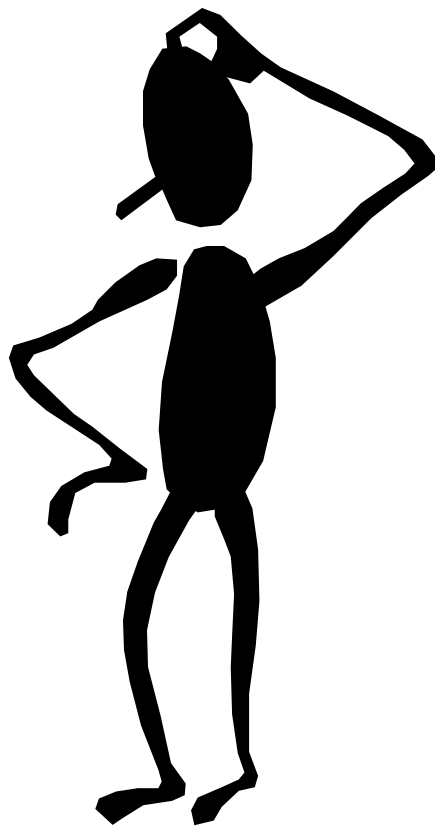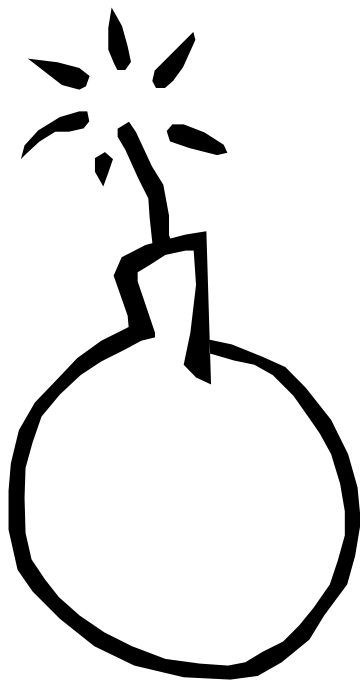
Questions?

Resources:

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Palomba, C.A. & Banta, T.W. (1999). *Assessment essentials: Planning, implementing and improving assessment in higher education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

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