

Constructs & Indicators

Here's one way to turn your evaluation questions into constructs and indicators and measure results!

Turn Evaluation Questions into Measurable Constructs and Indicators

Turning evaluation questions into answers requires that you first parse the question into measurable units or "constructs." It's getting more specific, focusing a lens on the most important aspects of the project that you want to measure in your evaluation.

What's a construct?

A construct is a concept that can be measured. It can be a very broad idea, or it can be very specific. The more specific it is, the easier it is to measure. For example, *health* is a construct. It can be measured with a series of tests at the doctor's office or by a self-rating scale completed by the individual. It is more useful though to think about *perceived health* (as measured by the rating scale), or *cardiac health* (as measured by an EKG at the doctor's office) or *mental health* (as measured by diagnostic tools used by psychologists). These smaller constructs (and they could be even smaller) help us to get closer to the answers we want.

Consider this formative evaluation question pose:

Are teachers changing/improving their practice as a result of participating in the professional development?

What does "improving their practice" mean? This is a very broad concept and should be broken down into smaller, measurable constructs. It could mean:

Construct

- Relying on content standards more
- Augmenting their curriculum with real-life examples
- Having their students engage in hands-on investigations
- Using assessments more regularly to gauge student progress

What would you expect your teachers to learn from the professional development program? If you've developed a logical model or conceptual framework, refer back to it and identify the important constructs to focus on.

The process of identifying constructs will also help you to determine whether your research questions can be answered at all. You must ask yourself: Can the outcomes be reliably measured? Can indicators of success be developed?

What's an indicator?

When assessing outcomes, it's important to have an idea of what success would look like and how it will be measured. An indicator is a measure of success. Indicators need to be expressed in quantifiable terms, such as numbers of events, professional development

hours or participants. Indicators measuring qualitative change (i.e. satisfaction, attitude) must also be expressed in quantifiable terms, such as number or percent of teachers satisfied or mean change in attitude.

Consider the constructs suggested above as a means of getting at improved practice. What would indicators of success be for each of these constructs? Here are some ideas:

Construct

- Relying on content standards more
- Augmenting their curriculum with real-life examples
- Having their students engage in hands-on investigations
- Using assessments more regularly to gauge student progress

Indicator

- Percent of teachers using content standards to plan their math instruction at least several times a week
- Percent of teachers who incorporate primary source materials into at least 50% of their social studies lessons
- Percent of time students spend on hands-on investigations during their science lessons
- Increased use of reading assessments with students

These are not the only appropriate indicators that can be used to measure these constructs. Come up with indicators that are most suitable for your evaluation needs. Note that you can think about the percent (or number) of teachers who use some strategy, or the frequency with which one teacher uses that strategy, or the change (or growth) in the use of that strategy, or many other measures.

What’s a Performance Indicator System?

By taking your conceptual framework, research questions, constructs, and indicators, you can create a performance indicator system to keep your evaluation on target.

Measuring Performance and Achieving Results

Whether you’re conducting a formative or summative evaluation, a Performance Indicator System enables you to assess how well your program is doing—from highlighting successes and identifying areas of improvement to developing new strategies for achieving optimal results.

A Performance Indicator System can help you:

- Achieve accountability
- Develop and justify budgets
- Guide improvement efforts
- Communicate with and inform stakeholders and the public at large

What’s Involved in a Performance Indicator System?

Developing a high-quality Performance Indicator System includes collecting and using outcome data to provide guidance for improvement. Enabling agencies to focus on results, not just on work activity and cost. Unfortunately, it’s difficult to obtain true indicators of

impact. So *outcome indicators*—both intermediate and end outcomes—are used. A Performance Indicator System should include:

- resources/inputs
- program output indicators
- initial outcome indicators
- intermediate outcome indicators
- end outcome indicators

See below for a sample indicator chart. It coordinates a project's objectives and outcomes with a set of quantifiable indicators, which constitute a good measure of success according to the designers and evaluators of the project.

For more information on outcome data, take a look at the [Urban Institute's Guide to Program Outcome Measurement](#).

		of Change	FFY 2004	2005	Goal 2010	Only (New)
*	<i>Monitoring Priority: FAPE in the LRE (continued)</i>					
4	RATES OF SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION (greater than 10 days): A. Percent of districts identified by the State as having a significant discrepancy in the rates of suspensions and expulsions of children with disabilities for greater than 10 days in a school year; and B. Percent of districts identified by the State as having a significant discrepancy in the rates of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 days in a school year of children with disabilities by race and ethnicity.	Decrease	6.83%	6.6%	5.5%	X
5	ENVIRONMENT: Percent of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21: A. Removed from regular class less than 21% of the day; (WI Code A) B. Removed from regular class greater than 60% of the day; (WI Code C) or C. Served in public or private separate schools, residential placements, or homebound or hospital placements. (WI Codes D,E,F,G,I,J)	Increase Decrease Decrease	(2004-05) 49.45% 12.20% 1.44%	51% 11.50% 1.25%	60% 10% 1%	
6.	PRESCHOOL LRE: Percent of preschool children with IEPs who received special education and related services in settings with typically developing peers (e.g., early childhood settings, home and part-time early childhood special education settings). (WI Codes L,N,P)	Increase	(2004-05) 35.86%	38%	50%	
7	PRESCHOOL OUTCOMES: Percent of preschool children with IEPs who demonstrate improved: A. Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships); B. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy); C. Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.					X
8	PARENT INVOLVEMENT: Percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities. (includes EC as well as 6-21)					X
*	<i>Monitoring Priority: Disproportionality</i>					
9	DISPROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATION IN SPEC ED & RELATED SERVICES: Percent of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services that is the result of inappropriate identification.			0%	0%	X
10	DISPROPOTIONATE REPRESENTATION IN SPECIFIC DISABILITY AREAS: Percent of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories that is the result of inappropriate identification.			0%	0%	X

#	Indicator	Direction of Change	Baseline FFY 2004	Target 2005	SPP Goal 2010	Plan Only (New)
*	<i>Monitoring Priority: Effective General Supervision Part B Effective General Supervision Part B/Child Find</i>					
11	TIMELY EVALUATIONS: Percent of children with parental consent to evaluate, who were evaluated and eligibility determined within 60 days (or State established timeline).			100%	100%	X
*	<i>Effective General Supervision Part B/Effective Transition</i>					
12	PART C TO PART B (Early Childhood Transition): Percent of children referred by Part C prior to age 3, who are found eligible for Part B, and who have an IEP developed and implemented by their 3rd birthdays.	Increase	(2004) 85%	100%	100%	
13	TRANSITION GOALS (Age 16): Percent of youth aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes coordinated, measurable, annual IEP goals and transition services that will reasonably enable the student to meet the postsecondary goals.			100%	100%	X
14	POST HIGH SCHOOL OUTCOMES: Percent of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school, or both, within one year of leaving high school.					X
*	<i>Effective General Supervision Part B/General Supervision</i>					
15	CORRECTED NONCOMPLIANCE: General supervision system (including monitoring, complaints, hearings, etc.) identifies and corrects noncompliance as soon as possible but in no case later than one year from identification.	Maintain	100%	100%	100%	
16	RESOLVED COMPLAINTS: Percent of signed written complaints with reports issued that were resolved within 60-day timeline or a timeline extended for exceptional circumstances with respect to a particular complaint.	Increase	82%	100%	100%	
17	DUE PROCESS: Percent of fully adjudicated due process hearing requests that were fully adjudicated within the 45-day timeline or a timeline that is properly extended by the hearing officer at the request of either party.	Maintain	100%	100%	100%	
18	RESOLUTION SESSIONS: Percent of hearing requests that went to resolution sessions that were resolved through resolution session settlement agreements.					X

#	Indicator	Direction of Change	Baseline FFY 2004	Target 2005	SPP Goal 2010	Plan Only (New)
*	<i>Effective General Supervision Part B/General Supervision (continued)</i>					
19	MEDIATIONS: Percent of mediations held that resulted in mediation agreements.	Maintain	(2004-05) 91%	75%	80%	
20	TIMELY AND ACCURATE DATA: State reported data (618 and State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report) are timely and accurate.	Maintain	100%	100%	100%	

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