

Outcome Data

There are basically two different kinds of data you will need to collect... *outcome* and *process* data.

Outcome data enable you to judge overall results. Outcome data are general indicator data that will tell you if you need to look at something more closely. It is similar to going to the doctor for your annual physical. When you go to the doctor, there are literally thousands of tests your doctor could run to assess your overall health. However, that would be too costly and take too much time. Instead, your doctor will use some basic indicators of your health such as checking your pulse, blood pressure, cholesterol, weight, etc. These general indicator data will inform the doctor about your overall health and well being. If any of the indicators are significantly different for you or not within an expected range, further tests may be ordered.

Collecting outcome data for your learning team is similar to the indicator data gathered at your annual physical. Outcome data are pre-determined, the data are collected annually (or sometimes twice a year), and the data are compared to an "expected" range. Examples of outcome data in schools include: pre- vs. post-test scores, standardized test scores in reading and math, number of dropouts, post-graduate follow-up survey results, etc.

Examples of outcome data your learning team may use include pre and post student learning data within a given year, or end-of-year results for two consecutive years. In either case, the data are comparing student scores (or learning) at two points in time.

Both outcome data and process data need to be collected. If outcome data indicate a problem, process data can help diagnose

where the problem lies, and identify root cause. Tracking process data will also help provide information before you get outcome data indicating something is wrong and needs intervention. Both outcome and process data need to be collected in consistent ways and organized so that they will inform potential users of the data.

The best ways to display outcome data include:

- A pie graph if you are showing parts of a whole.
- A bar graph if you are showing comparisons between one point in time and another.

