How to Assess
Common Reading Programs

Presented by

Karen L. Weathermon, Ph.D.
Director of First-Year Programs
Co-Chair of the Common Reading Program
Office of Undergraduate Education, Washington State University Pullman

Suzanne Smith, Ph.D.
Special Assistant to the Vice Chancellor
Associate Professor of Human Development
Academic Affairs, Washington State University Vancouver

Leslie Jo Sena
Assistant Director First-Year Programs
WSU Common Reading Assessment Coordinator
First-Year Success Seminar Coordinator
Office of Undergraduate Education, Washington State University Pullman

WSU COMMON READING

Contact Information

Karen L. Weathermon, Ph.D.
Director of First-Year Programs
Co-Chair of the WSU Common Reading Program
Washington State University
P.O. Box 644519
Pullman, WA 99164-4519
509-335-5488 (work, preferred)
509-592-8565 (cell)
kweathermon@wsu.edu

Suzanne Smith
Special Assistant to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs
Associate Professor of Human Development
Washington State University Vancouver
14304 NE Salmon Creek Ave.
Vancouver, WA 98686-9600
360-546-9714
smithsu@wsu.edu

Leslie Jo Sena
Assistant Director First-Year Programs
Common Reading Assessment Coordinator
Washington State University
P.O. Box 645020
Pullman, WA 99164-5020
509-330-6975 (cell, preferred)
senal@wsu.edu
LeslieJoSena@gmail.com

Sample surveys, assessment reports, and more information about our programs can be found at:

https://Commonreading.wsu.edu

Session Agenda

4:45-5:00   Introductions and overview
                 Group discussion: Who you are and what you want to know
                 Share out: Something you found interesting or surprising about a
                 program in your group.

5:00-5:30   Articulating the goals of your Common Reading program
                 Translating goals into measurable outcomes

5:30–6:00   Identifying sorting points: points of contact and student demographic and
                 situational data

                 Correlation between sorting points and outcomes

6:00-6:15   Uses of assessment data and creating an assessment web

The Big Question –"WHY"

- What are your program's target goals for students?
- What do you hope that students will experience as a result of your program?
- What are behaviors or attitudes that you hope will result from your program?

Goals of your Common Reading Program
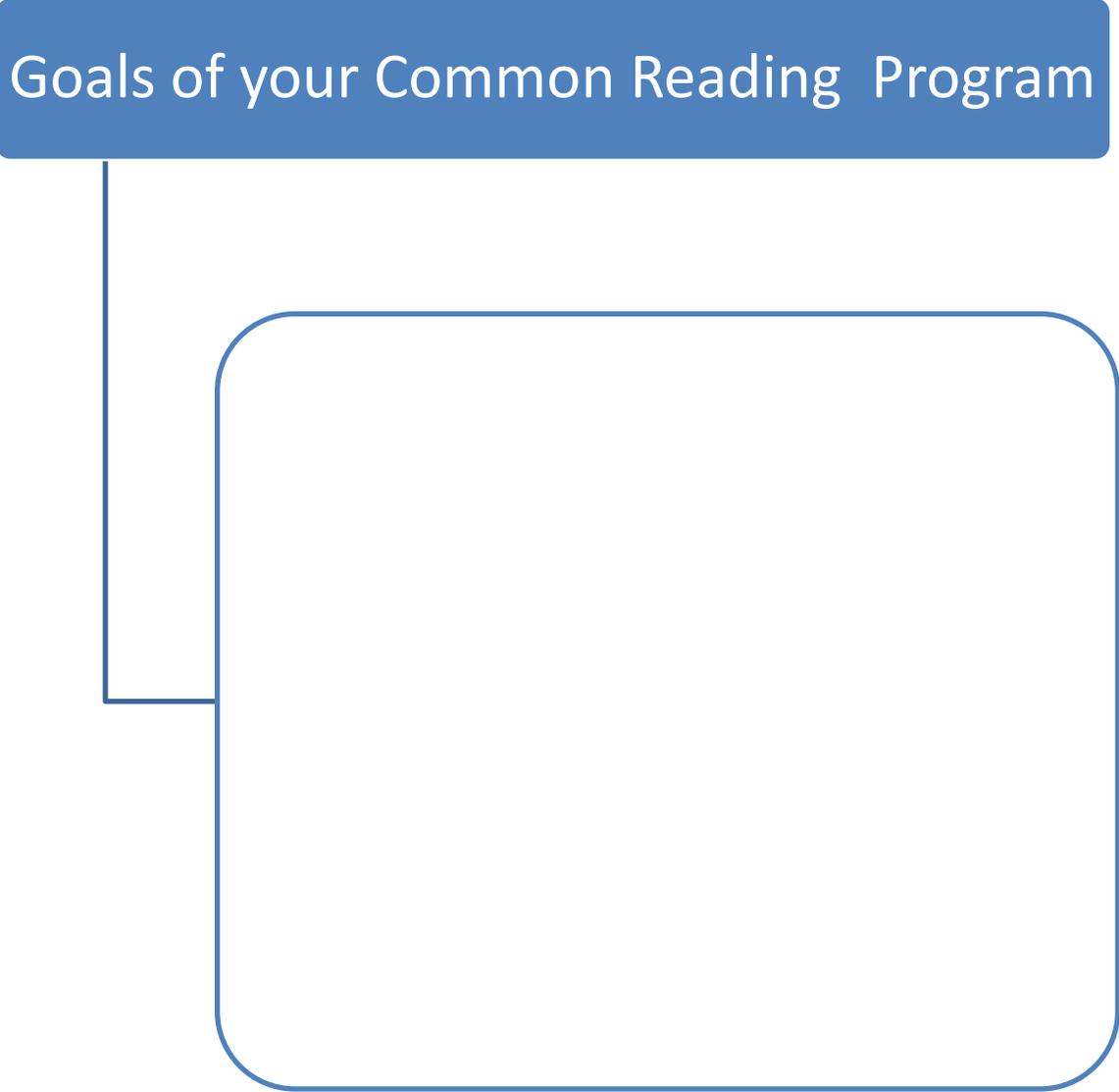
Translating Goals into Outcome Statements

- How will you measure this outcome?
- What can your respondents reliably report?
- What is your question really measuring? Attitude, behavior, understanding?
- Do not refer to your program in the item
- Statements should be able to be rated "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree"

Measurable Outcome Statements
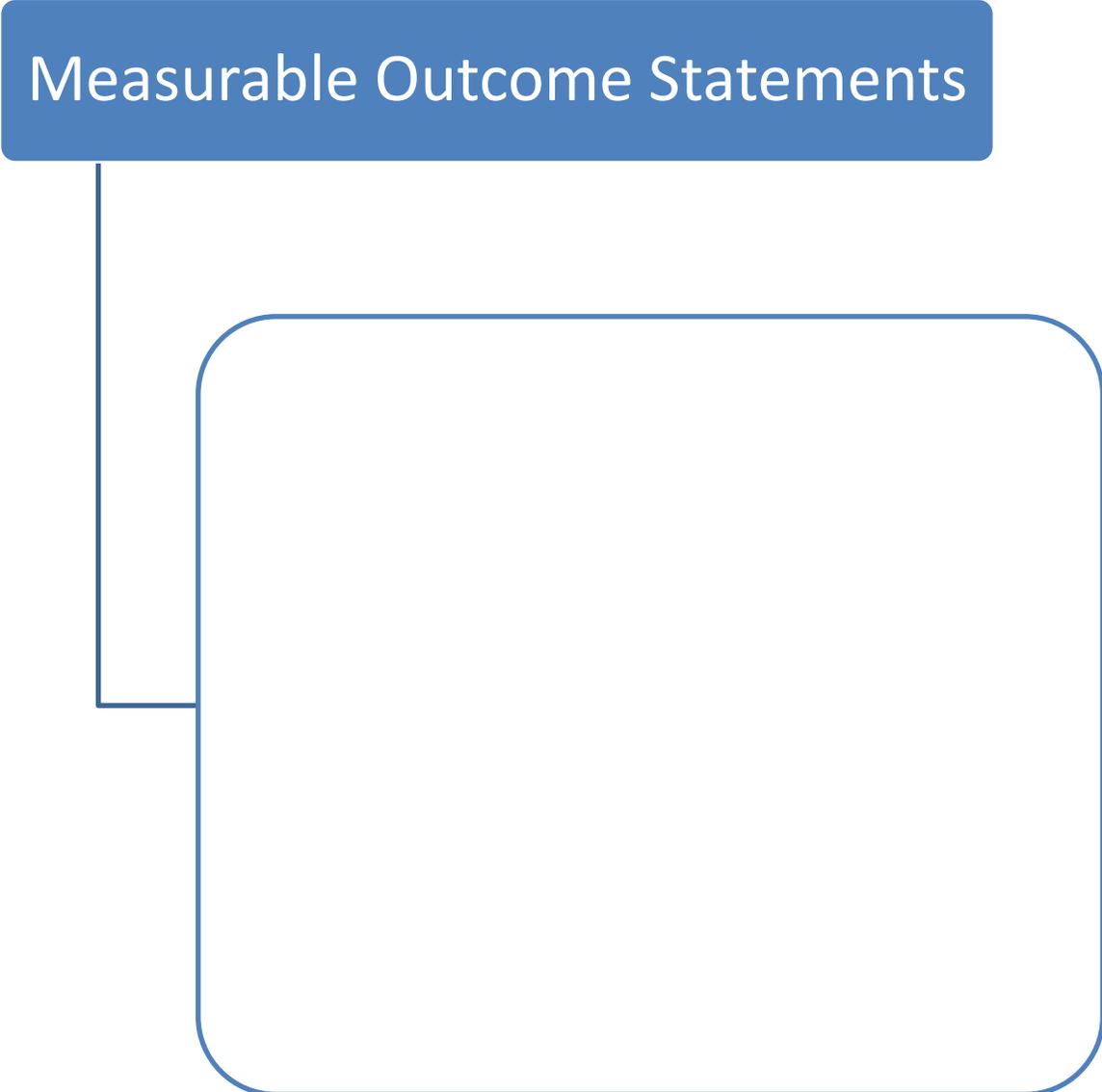
How Can We Make This Happen?

- Locations (physical or metaphorical) where these outcomes might be enacted?
- What activities or events would support your target outcomes?
- How might specific classes address outcomes?
- How could your book selection strengthen outcomes?
- What would students reaching these outcomes look like on your campus?

Brainstorm Points of Contact

Using Correlation to find what works

- **Students report demographic and situational data**

- **Students rate their "First-Year Experience," which are Common Reading Outcomes**

- **Students report levels of involvement with Common Reading program**

We do not ask students if the program helped them. Rather, we look to correlation to show us which students rated their Common Reading outcome statements higher than others.

First-Year students necessarily have nothing to compare their first year with. And, negative feelings about the book or program might cause them to respond negatively to questions about them, even if they did get some benefit.

Some sample correlation findings at Washington State University:

- A year that students rated their interest in the book very positively, but faculty didn't use it much yielded lower benefit to CR outcomes than a year when students rated the book very low interest, but had a lot of classroom use: Students don't have to love the book (for our program); they just have to have it used in class.

- Positive correlation between number of common reading events attended and level of interest in the book. Additional assessments at our events showed that >95% of students attended for extra credit or course requirement with few adding "personal interest" as a reason for attending. This suggests that students' interest in the book is improved by exposure to discussions related to the book.

- Our statement "I saw how a complex problem can be viewed from many perspectives" was rated most positively by students who had attended more than two common reading lectures.

Using Correlation to find what works

- Did when students received their books have an effect on how much they read?
- Did students' rated interest in the book affect how they rated the outcomes?
- Did a greater level of contact with the Common Reader correlate with better ratings for outcomes?
- Did residential students report different behaviors or contact with the program than commuters?

What will you investigate?
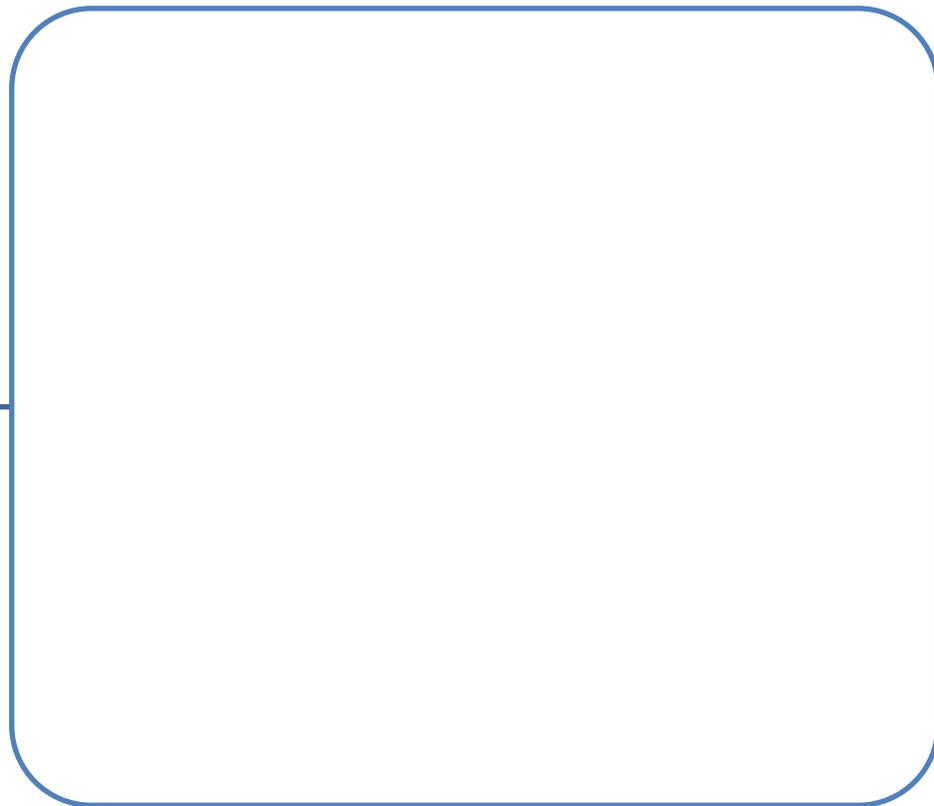
Survey Delivery

Large scale one-time survey: E-mail invitation with informed consent

- Surveys to individual student e-mail addresses
    - Individual URL e-invite and possible link to student ID
    - Invitation with consent to common URL (Survey Monkey)
- Open URL 2D barcode, set up survey computers
- Scantron in-class – highest response rate if collected during class

Obtaining E-mails

- Emails aquired from registrar or other office
- May require IRB materials or other information for permission
- For most campuses, e-mail is not private information, but bulk e-mail addresses are protected by administration

Faculty Administered In-Class Surveys

- Ideally only reach each student once
- Dedicated FYE seminar or other core course
- Even if faculty did not participate in the program

Gathering Additional Data at multiple points

- Lecture/Programming Attendance
- Short and simple
- Can gather different information
    - Measurements at different points in the semester
    - Hand out two different questionnaires
- Adding questions to existing surveys on campus

What types of assessment would be relevant for your program?

What survey delivery might work best with your students/campus?

Notes

THANK YOU!