Building a Culture of Learning and Improvement

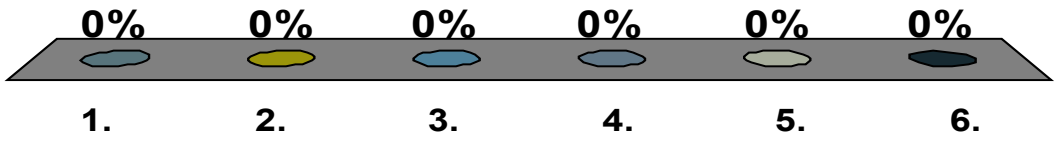
Nathan Lindsay

Vice Provost—University of Montana

September 13, 2019

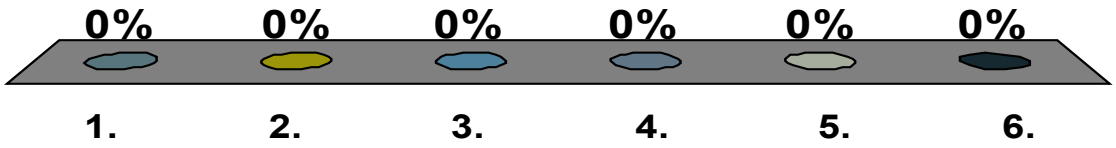
I have a good sense for how my work or teaching is "making a difference" in students' lives and learning.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Not applicable



Our department has the information/data it needs to "tell a compelling story" of how we are contributing to student success.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Not applicable



What we're about…

- "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." — William Butler Yates

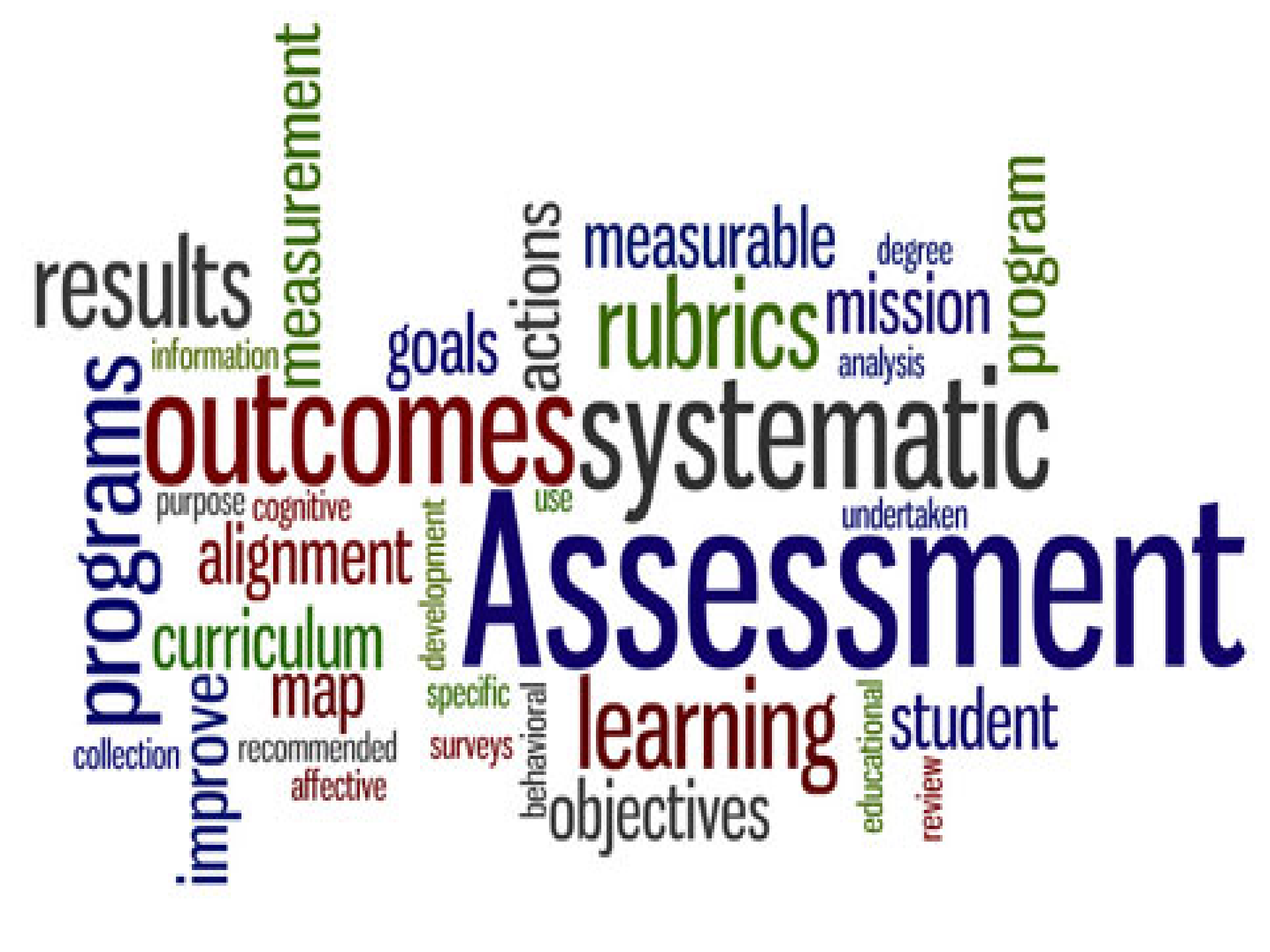
Can dogs talk?

What are the benefits of assessment?

- Making a difference, and measuring that difference
- Improvement of programs
- Documentation of student learning
- Demonstration of the value/outcomes of certain offerings
- Support for more funding
- Preparation for accreditation

Four “Big Picture” questions to ask about student learning

- How do you define a successful student?
- What have you learned about your students’ learning?
- Are you satisfied with the results?
- If not satisfied with the results, what are you going to do about it?

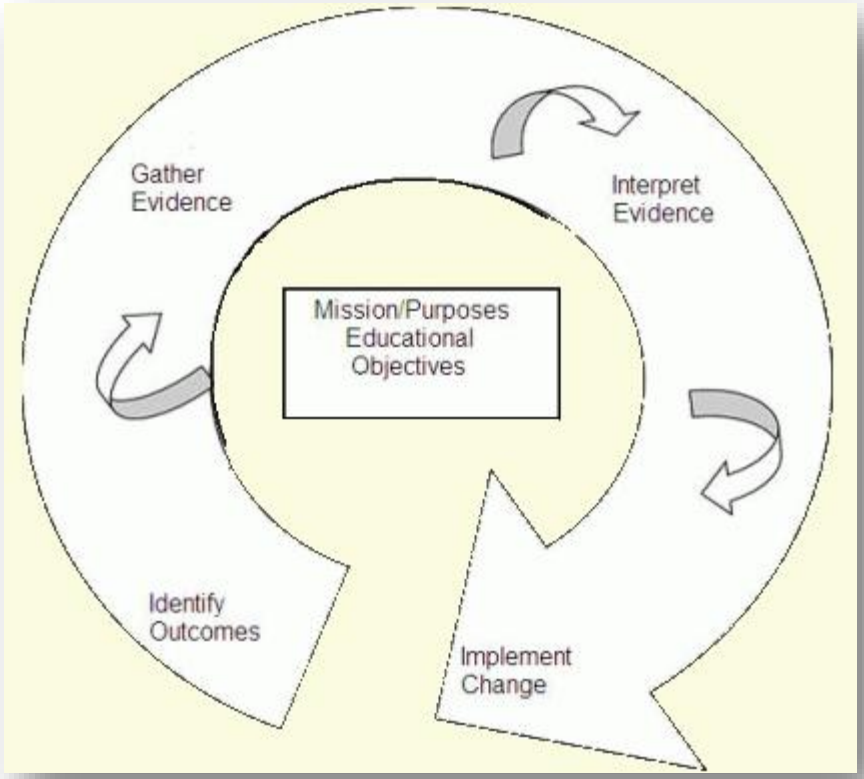

Assessment
outcomes
systematic
results
measurement
actions
measurable
degree
rubrics
mission
program
goals
information
analysis
programs
purpose
cognitive
alignment
use
undertaken
development
curriculum
map
specific
learning
student
improve
collection
recommended
surveys
behavioral
objectives
educational
review
affective

Initial Assessment Components for Each Academic Degree

- Mission statement
- Department Objectives
- Student Learning Outcomes
- Measurements (& Achievement Targets)
- Findings
- Action Plans

“Closing the Loop” in Assessment

1. Identify outcomes
2. Gather evidence
3. Interpret evidence
4. Implement change
5. Gather evidence again



The Assessment Cycle

From Maki, P. L. (2002). Developing an assessment plan to learn about learning. The Journal of Academic Librarianship.

What are Learning Outcomes?

Learning outcomes are what *students* are expected to *demonstrate* in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes upon completion of a program, course, or activity.

Levels of Outcomes

- Class: Outcomes individual faculty have developed for their class
- Course: Outcomes that are shared across all faculty teaching sections of the same course
- Program: Outcomes that the program has defined for all students graduating in that program

- Format for learning outcomes:

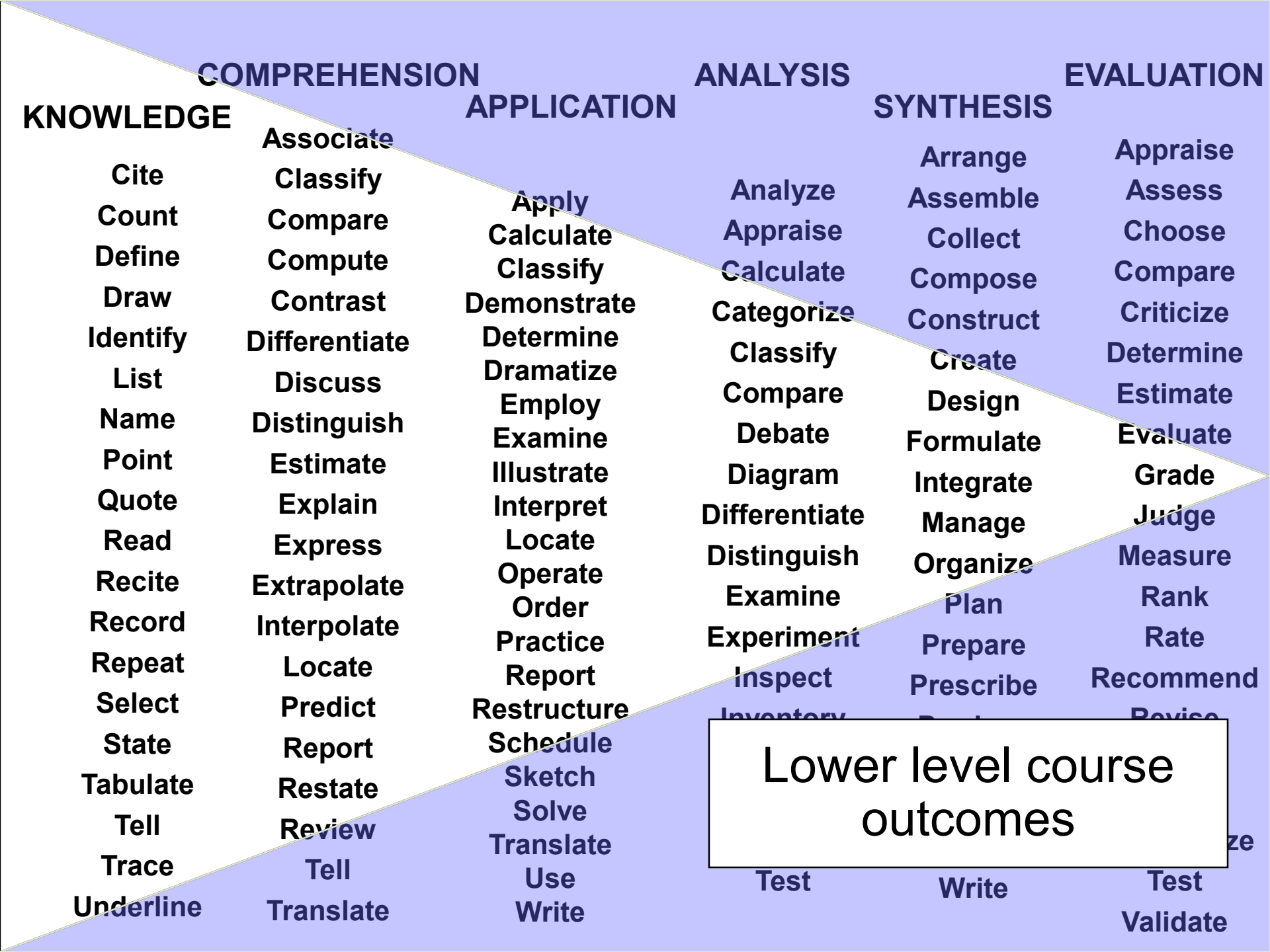
Students will be able to

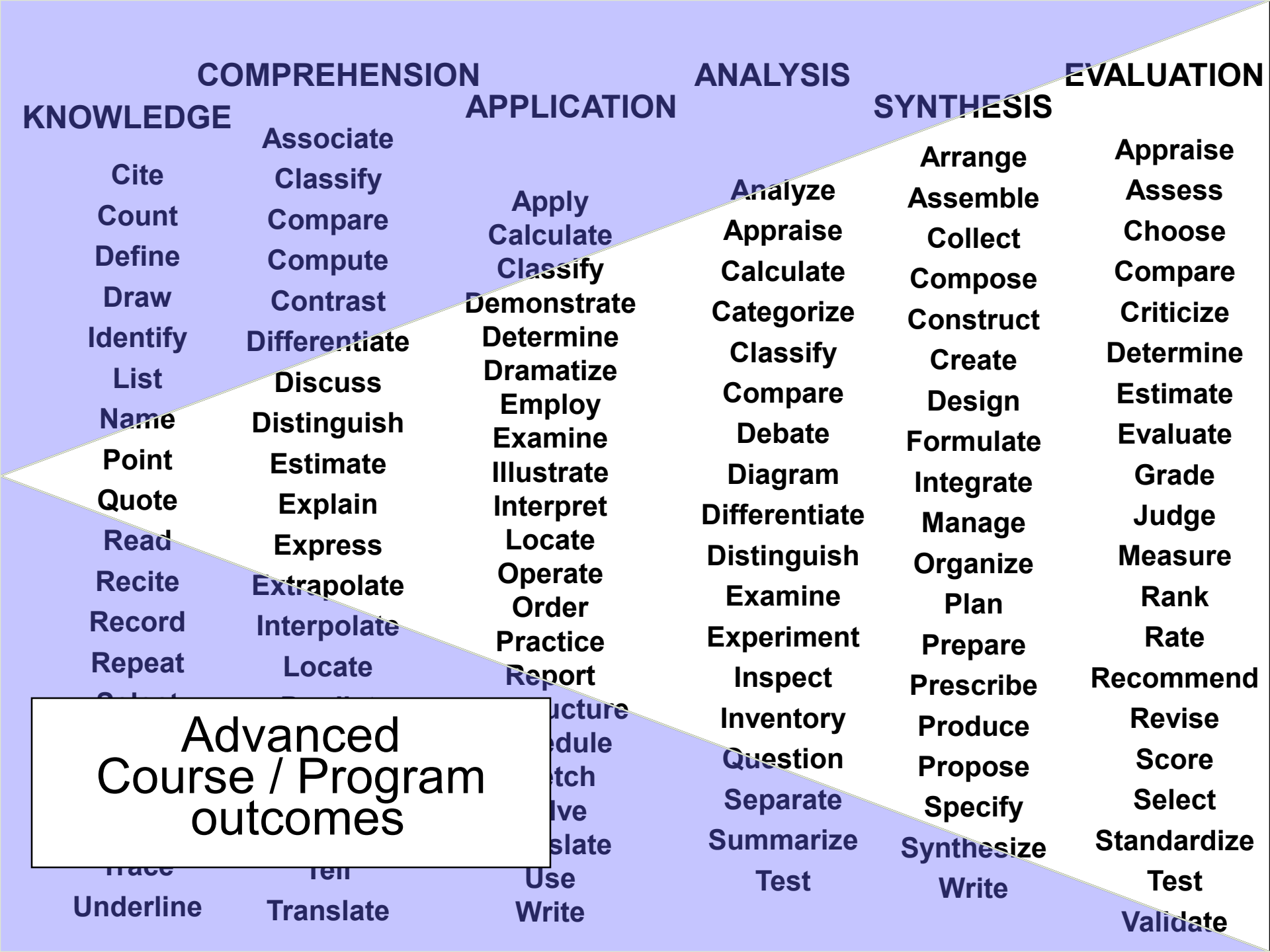
<<action verb>>

<<something>>

Developing Learning Outcomes

- Remember: *SMART*
  - **Specific**—Clear and definite terms describing the abilities, knowledge, values, attitudes, and performance
  - **Measurable/Observable**—It is feasible to get data: data are accurate and reliable; it can be assessed in more than one way
  - ***Attainable***—The outcome stretches students without overwhelming them
  - ***Relevant/Results-Oriented***—It describes what standards are expected from students
  - ***Time-bound***—It describes a specified time period for accomplishing the outcome


KNOWLEDGE
Cite
Count
Define
Draw
Identify
List
Name
Point
Quote
Read
Recite
Record
Repeat
Select
State
Tabulate
Tell
Trace
Underline
COMPREHENSION
Associate
Classify
Compare
Compute
Contrast
Differentiate
Discuss
Distinguish
Estimate
Explain
Express
Extrapolate
Interpolate
Locate
Predict
Report
Restate
Review
Tell
Translate
APPLICATION
Apply
Calculate
Classify
Demonstrate
Determine
Dramatize
Employ
Examine
Illustrate
Interpret
Locate
Operate
Order
Practice
Report
Restructure
Schedule
Sketch
Solve
Translate
Use
Write
ANALYSIS
Analyze
Appraise
Calculate
Categorize
Classify
Compare
Debate
Diagram
Differentiate
Distinguish
Examine
Experiment
Inspect
Test
SYNTHESIS
Arrange
Assemble
Collect
Compose
Construct
Create
Design
Formulate
Integrate
Manage
Organize
Plan
Prepare
Prescribe
Write
EVALUATION
Appraise
Assess
Choose
Compare
Criticize
Determine
Estimate
Evaluate
Grade
Judge
Measure
Rank
Rate
Recommend
Test
Validate
Lower level course outcomes


KNOWLEDGE
Cite
Count
Define
Draw
Identify
List
Name
Point
Quote
Read
Recite
Record
Repeat
Underline
COMPREHENSION
Associate
Classify
Compare
Compute
Contrast
Differentiate
Discuss
Distinguish
Estimate
Explain
Express
Extrapolate
Interpolate
Locate
Translate
APPLICATION
Apply
Calculate
Classify
Demonstrate
Determine
Dramatize
Employ
Examine
Illustrate
Interpret
Locate
Operate
Order
Practice
Use
Write
ANALYSIS
Analyze
Appraise
Calculate
Categorize
Classify
Compare
Debate
Diagram
Differentiate
Distinguish
Examine
Experiment
Inspect
Inventory
Question
Separate
Summarize
Test
SYNTHESIS
Arrange
Assemble
Collect
Compose
Construct
Create
Design
Formulate
Integrate
Manage
Organize
Plan
Prepare
Prescribe
Produce
Propose
Specify
Synthesize
Write
EVALUATION
Appraise
Assess
Choose
Compare
Criticize
Determine
Estimate
Evaluate
Grade
Judge
Measure
Rank
Rate
Recommend
Revise
Score
Select
Standardize
Test
Validate
Advanced
Course / Program
outcomes

Assessment Methods (Schuh, 2009)

- Exams
- Rubrics
- Surveys
- Focus Group/ Interview
- Observation
- Pre-/Post Tests
- Portfolios
- Case Studies
- Reflective Journals
- One-Minute Paper
- Tracking Services
- Trends
- Cost/Benefit Analysis
- Document Review

"Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts."

Readings

- “What New Faculty Need to Know about Assessment” (http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/documents/ABfaculty.pdf)
- “Creating a Faculty Culture of Student Success” (http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/pubs/Creating%20A%20Faculty%20Culture%20of%20Student%20Success.pdf)

Part II:
Enhancing Curriculum Mapping

Definition

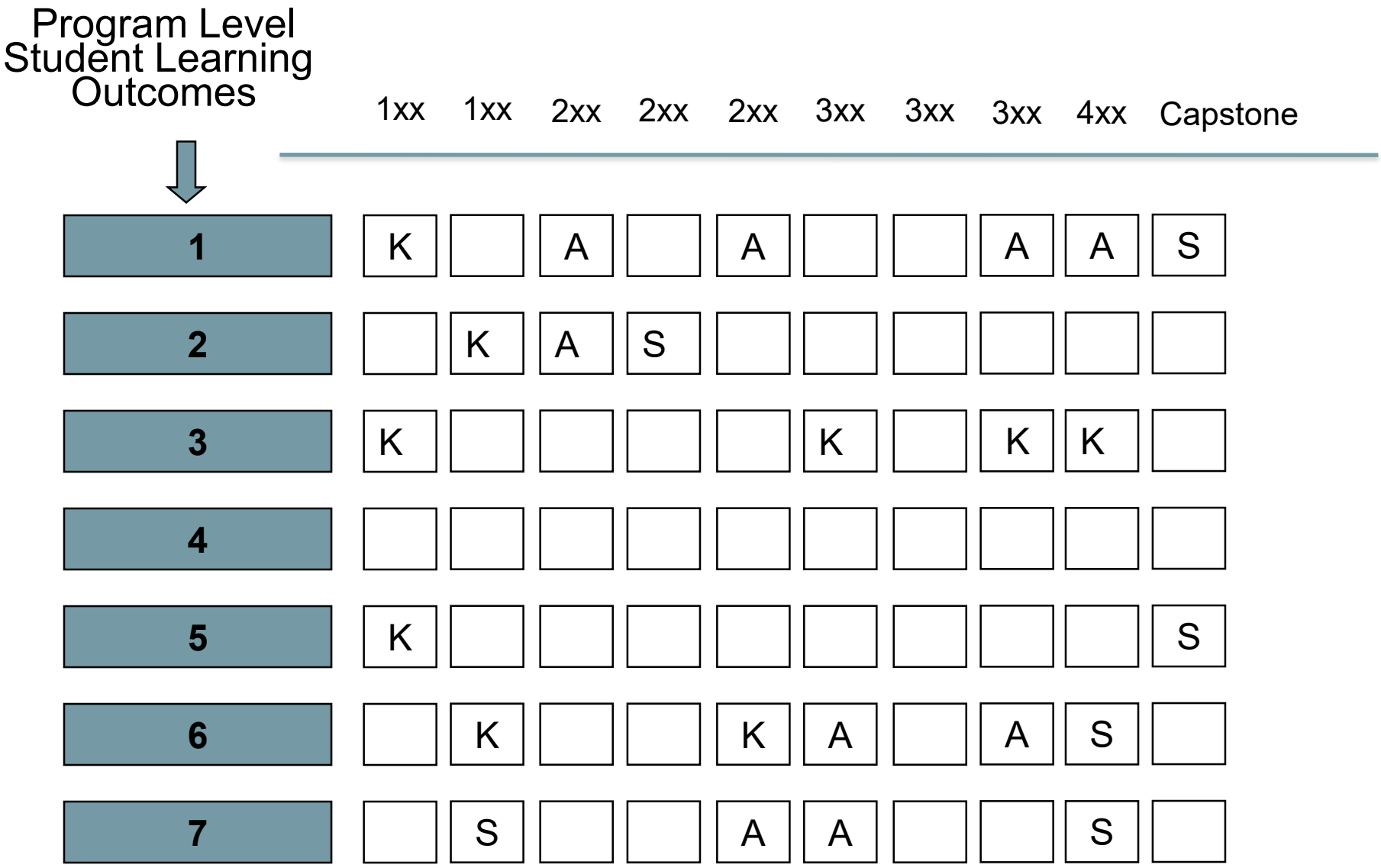
- A method for aligning a program's learning outcomes and courses

A Curriculum Map answers the question:

- Where are what learning outcomes taught in your curriculum?

Benefits

- Proactive approach to improving learning outcomes
- Encourages reflective practice as instructors
- Clarifies priorities when there are limited resources
- Enhances coherence by revealing gaps in the curriculum
- Improves communication among faculty
- Supports "major maps" for students
- Refines the assessment plan



K= Knowledge/Comprehension; A= Application / Analysis; S= Synthesis /Evaluation

A curriculum map how-to

Begin by collecting the primary ingredients

- Program's intended learning outcomes
- Recommended and required courses (including Gen Ed courses, if desired)
- Any other required events /experiences (e.g., internships, department symposiums, advising sessions, and perhaps even national licensure exams)

Curriculum Mapping Best Practices

- Involve as many faculty as possible in the development and analysis of the curriculum map
- Identify learning opportunities within courses that will produce your program's outcomes
- Connect the dots: communicate expectations from course to course
- Allow each member of your faculty to teach to their strengths

Curriculum Mapping Best Practices (Cont.)

- Eliminate outcomes that are not highly valued, or add those that are missing
- Focus on highly valued outcomes by including them in multiple courses – for some there will be room for overlap
- Set priorities as a department/program
- Communicate: Publish the curriculum map online and distribute to students and faculty (in conjunction with major maps and student learning outcomes)

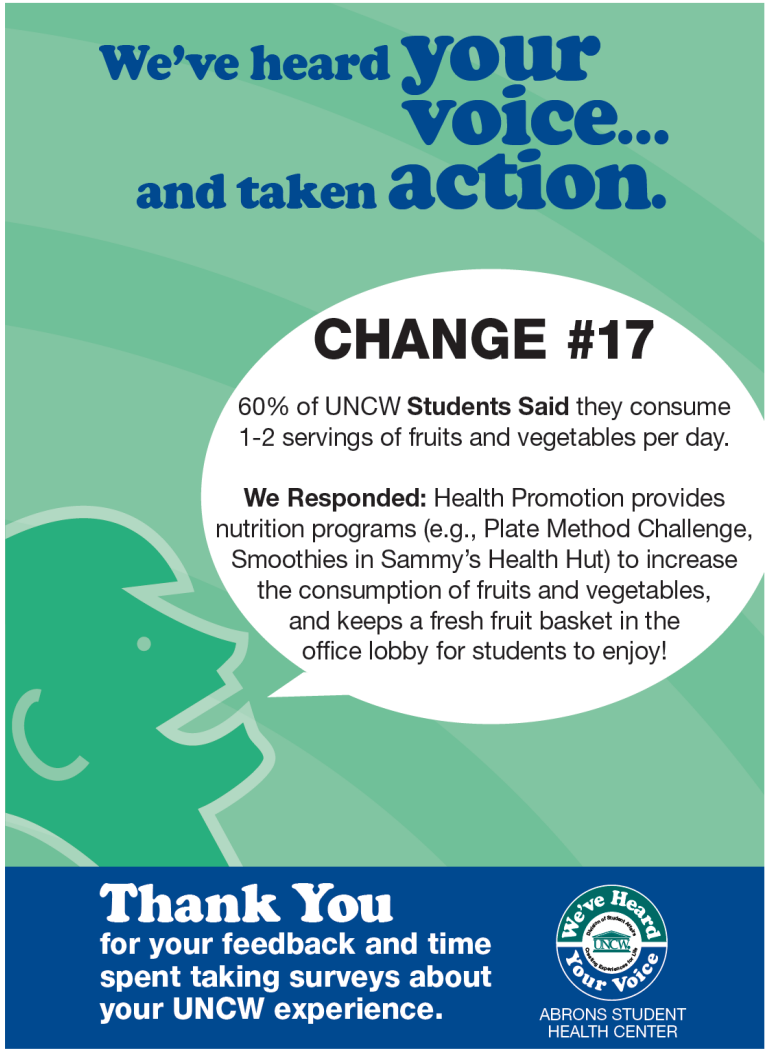
Student Involvement in Assessment

- Assessment should not be done behind a curtain
- Make assessment transparent for all students

Making Assessment Transparent to Students

- **Outline the learning outcomes** for your courses and degree, and list in the syllabus and on program website.
- **Explain the connections** between assignments and the learning outcomes.
- **Explain the criteria for evaluating assignments** (using a rubric or scoring guide— search on Google for rubrics in your field).
- Have students use the rubrics, **give feedback on assignments**, and provide opportunities for students to improve their work.

Letting Students Know You've Heard Their Voice



- Initiative developed by the Office of Student Life Assessment, based on similar program in student affairs at the University of Georgia.
- Communicates assessment findings back to the student body and other constituents.
- Emphasis is placed on demonstrating improvements made due to:
  - response to surveys
  - focus groups
  - other feedback

Celebrate Good Assessment Results

- Students:
  - departmental showcase or newsletter
  - student research conference
  - Share student work as models for others
- Faculty:
  - Publish scholarship of assessment
  - Share results with students and other stakeholders
- All:
  - Promote a Culture of Learning on Campus

Question:

How can we help our students to be more aware and more involved in the assessment process?

We have the best jobs in the world

References

- Suskie, L. (2009). *Assessing student learning: A common sense guide, 2nd Edition.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Walvoord, B. (2004). *Assessment clear and simple: A practical guide for institutions, departments, and general education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Contact Information

- For assistance with assessment, please contact
  - Nathan Lindsay

    Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

    University of Montana
    (406) 243-4689
    nathan.lindsay@umontana.edu