

MISA BIPSA Toolkit Glossary

Accountability

Accountability means accepting responsibility for professional decisions and actions, use of resources, results achieved, providing goals for improvement and demonstrating to stakeholders that actions are being taken to accomplish them.

Action

An “action” in the context of a program or initiative is what activities the program or initiative undertakes, e.g., development of materials, training programs.

Action Research

Action Research is a form of practitioner research in which the research is conducted by individuals and focuses on their own work/practice. The research is self-developing and answers the question “How can I improve what I am doing?” It follows a cyclical process of inquiry: develop a focus, select achievement targets, develop a theory of action, take action, analyze data, reflect, revise theory of action and continue the cycle.

Analysis

Data analysis is the process of inspecting, transforming, describing facts and detecting patterns with the goal of discovering useful information, testing hypotheses, and supporting decision making.

Archival Research (see also Document Review)

Archival research is an examination of existing records, reports, and documents related to the topic of inquiry and often undertaken with other forms of research such as empirical investigation.

Assessment

Assessment in Board Improvement Planning is the systematic collection, analysis, and use of information about educational programs for the purpose of improving student learning.

Assessment in the classroom is the process of gathering, from a variety of sources, information that accurately reflects and helps determine how well a student is achieving the curriculum expectations in a subject or course

Baseline Data

Baseline data is the initial collection of data before a program has been implemented that serves as a basis for comparison with subsequently collected data to determine program effectiveness.

Benchmark (see also Performance Standards, Success Criteria)

A benchmark is a standard or point of reference against which performance or achievement can be compared. A benchmark refers to a “gold standard”, best practice or achievement level.

Best Practice

A best practice is a method or strategy that, through experience and research, has consistently shown to lead to desired results when implemented effectively.

Collaborative Inquiry

Collaborative inquiry is a teacher-driven process whereby participants work together to reflect on their own practice systematically using research methods in order to address a common student learning need. The group works together throughout the process to arrive at specific conclusions and next steps.

Criteria

A principle or standard used to make a judgment about something, e.g., success criteria.

Data

Qualitative or quantitative information gathered by teachers, principals or the district and used as the basis for analysis, discussion, and next steps, e.g. report cards, student work, school improvement planning, board improvement planning.

Data Analysis

The process of systematically applying statistical and logical techniques to describe, summarize, compare, and evaluate data.

Data Collection Instrument (see also Data Collection Tools)

A document that is used to collect information on a particular topic, e.g., interview guide, survey, attendance records.

Data Collection Plan

A written document describing the specific procedures used to gather data. The plan should include who collects the information, when and where it is collected, and how it is collected.

Data Collection Tools (see also Data Collection Instrument)

Methods used to identify information sources and collect information, e.g., surveys, focus groups, literature review.

Data Integration

The merging of datasets.

Data Sources

The persons, documents, products, activities, events, and records from which data is collected.

Data Visualization (see also Infographic)

A graphical representation of data, using charts, graphs, maps, etc.

Dissemination (see also Reporting)

The communication of information (e.g., results, research findings), by written, oral, and/or other means, in order to further knowledge.

Documentation

Materials used to record information about something, e.g., student work portfolio, report cards.

Document Review (see also Archival Research)

A form of data collection that involves examining the content of records or documents.

Effect (see also Impact, Outcome)

Intended or unintended change that can be linked to an intervention, or on a School or Board Improvement Plan, as the result of strategies or actions that are meant to effect change in teaching practice or student learning.

Effectiveness

The extent to which an intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved. Also used to discuss the value of an activity, i.e., the extent to which an intervention has or is expected to have an impact on student learning.

Empirical Research

Research that uses data drawn from observation or experience.

Evaluation (see also Program Evaluation)

The systematic collection and analysis of information to make judgments to improve or inform future decisions about a program or strategy.

Evaluation Plan

A written document describing the overall approach or design used to guide an evaluation. The plan includes what will be done, how it will be done, who will do it, when it will be done, and why the evaluation is being conducted.

Fidelity

How closely a set of procedures were implemented as they were supposed to be. Program fidelity is important because we cannot determine the success of a strategy or program if it was not implemented as it was supposed to be.

Gap Analysis (see also Needs Assessment)

Comparing actual performance with potential performance; answers to the questions, "where are we" and "where should we be?" are used to determine what steps need to be taken in order to move something from its current to future state.

Goal

A general statement of an intended outcome; it is usually operationalized into a measurable objective(s).

Impact (see also Effect, Outcome)

Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by an intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

Implementation

The process of putting all components of a program into action.

Implementation Quality

The discrepancy between what is planned and what is actually delivered. As a result, it is necessary to specify the model against which actual practice will be measured.

Indicator

An indicator indicates performance and, thus, is used to judge the success of a program or intervention. E.g., the percent of students who moved from level 1 to level 2

Infographic (see also Data Visualization)

An infographic is a graphical representation that combines one or more data visualizations with other non-data elements - such as graphics or text - to point out relationships, show a process or tell a story that cannot be automatically discerned from the data alone. Developing an infographic requires a creative process with some understanding of the underlying data and its context.

Information Sources

The persons, groups, and documents from which data is obtained.

Inquiry

Thinking critically about the meaning and purpose of something, e.g., an inquiry process around one aspect of board improvement planning as a means to delve deeply into questions about the impact of the related initiatives.

Intermediate-Term Outcomes

Program or intervention outcomes observed shortly after the immediate outcomes of knowledge and skills changes. Intermediate-term outcomes are typically changes in attitudes, beliefs and aspirations.

Intervention (see also Program)

Any planned effort that is designed to produce specific changes in peoples' thoughts, feelings, or behaviours.

Knowledge Mobilization

Moving available knowledge into active use. It involves efforts to bridge the gap between research, policy and practice in order to improve outcomes.

Longitudinal Data

Information that is collected over a period of time. The sample may not be the same each time but the population is the same.

Long-Term Outcome

Results of a program not seen right away but appearing after some time has passed and/or the program has matured. Long-term outcomes are usually the ultimate outcomes of a program, the change in habit or behavior that produces the desired or intended effect.

Measure

A measure measures performance and, thus, is used to collect data, e.g., interview questions, a survey, a test.

Method

The techniques or procedures used to gather and analyze data related to a research question or hypothesis. For example, in action research the following methods are sometimes employed: journaling, document collection and analysis, observation recordings, questionnaires, interviews.

Methodology

The strategy, plan of action, process or design that informs your choice of particular methods. For example, some principles of action research methodology are that it is reflexive, collaborative, involves risk, and is cyclical. This informs the methods that will be chosen in action research projects and how they will be used. Experimental research methodology may use some of the same methods but in very different ways, e.g., in a randomized trial of a smoking cessation drug, researchers may use journaling as a means of tracking participants' cravings.

Monitoring

A continuous and systematic process of using data to observe an intervention and consider progress.

Needs Assessment (see also Gap Analysis)

A systematic process for gathering information about a group that indicates the need for an intervention, e.g., a focus on a specific student need.

Objective (adjective)

A characteristic of an assessment or observation that minimizes the impact of bias and subjectivity, and that yields results which can be empirically verified.

Objective (noun)

Specific results or effects of an intervention's activities that must be achieved in pursuing the intervention's goals.

Observation

A data collection strategy where the subjects are visually examined and possibly recorded for later analysis of the observations.

Outcome (see also Effect, Impact)

Changes or benefits resulting from activities and outputs.

Pedagogical Documentation

A cyclical process whereby many forms of text and visuals are collected to make student learning visible and to create a record for dialogue, reflection and analysis.

Performance

The degree to which an intervention operates according to specific criteria/standards/ guidelines or achieves results in accordance with established goals.

Performance Standards (see also Benchmark, Success Criteria)

The standard against which program performance is compared for evaluation. It should be objective, measurable, realistic, and clearly written.

Planning

The process of anticipating future occurrences and problems, exploring possible impacts, and detailing policies, goals, objectives, and strategies to solve challenges. Any planning process should begin with the reflection and review of what has been done in the past and its impact.

Program (see also Intervention)

Any activity that has an identifiable purpose or set of objectives.

Program Analysis

The analysis of program components to determine effectiveness and relevance. In board improvement planning this may include analysis of strategies and/or actions as well as other programs that are being used for student learning and well-being.

Program Evaluation (see also Evaluation)

The systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming.

Qualitative Research

Collecting data with a focus on describing meaning rather than with drawing statistical inferences. Qualitative data analysis provides an in depth and rich description.

Quantitative Research

Collecting data with a focus on numbers and frequencies rather than on meaning and experience. Quantitative methods (e.g. experiments, questionnaires and psychometric tests) provide information which is easy to analyze statistically and fairly reliable.

Regression

A statistical process for estimating the relationships among variables. It includes many techniques for modeling and analyzing several variables. Regression analysis can tell us how strong a relationship between variables is and if it is statistically significant.

Reliability

The degree of consistency of measurement. A reliable measure provides nearly the same answer time after time.

Reporting (see also Dissemination)

The process of communicating results and recommendations to stakeholders.

Scatterplot

A way to represent data as a collection of points, each having the value of one variable determining the position on the horizontal axis and the value of the other variable determining the position on the vertical axis.

Short-term Outcome

Immediate or early results of a program, e.g., changes in knowledge and skills

Significant (see Statistical Significance)

It is best not to use the word “significant” when describing important or meaningful observations because it is inferred to mean “statistically significant”.

Stakeholders

Individuals or groups served by, influenced by, or interested in the program or evaluation.

Statistical Significance

The probability that an effect is not likely due to just chance alone. A statistic is considered significant not because it is important or meaningful, but because it has been tested using a statistical model which determined that it is unlikely to have occurred by chance alone.

Strategic Plan

The process of comprehensive program planning that is iterant and considers planning, policy, development, and the future of current decisions.

Strategy

A high level plan to achieve one or more goals. In improvement planning, a strategy is the planning to achieve board/school goals.

Success Criteria (see also Performance Standards, Benchmark)

The indicator created to determine whether a program has satisfied its objectives and met the necessary requirements.

Target

An objective or result towards which efforts are directed

Trend

The change in a series of data that can be seen over a period of years.

Triangulation

A powerful technique used to cross-verify data or findings. There are different types of triangulation, for example, it can be data triangulation: data from different samples, different places, different times; investigator triangulation: multiple researchers comparing their findings; method triangulation: using more than one method such as interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documents.

Validity

The extent to which an instrument measures what is it supposed to measure.