Step One: Choose something VERY IMPORTANT.

Choose one significant educational outcome that you would most like to assess and possibly improve. This should be something important in your class—something worth your time to assess and improve.

Some ideas for problems:

- What is something you are teaching that the students just never seem to “get?” This might be something that is pivotal for understanding or performing in the rest of the lesson or course.
- Is there something students do in their assignments that really drives you nuts? They ask questions about it, they do the assignment incorrectly, they hate the assignment, or something comparable?
- Do your students use threaded discussion but do not remain very focused on the learning task? Is a lot of their discussion just chatty?
- Do your students send you too much e-mail? Do you want them to talk more to each other?
- Do your students not do your assigned reading?
- Is it hard to get students to work in groups so that everyone is sharing the assignment responsibility?
- Do students in your program write poorly?
- Do students perform poorly in their capstone experiences?

Remember, this process takes time.
Work on something important.

Describe the issue or problem.

This is a sample of one faculty member’s concern that his students were not writing acceptable business memos. He described the problem as:

Students should be writing a business memo that is supposed to achieve a change in business practice, but what I am seeing is poorly done. I have to correct papers extensively and reread the corrections students make. I want to change this so students are achieving at a level that I want. I don’t want to have to recorrect the papers.
Describe an outcome you would like to see.

In other words, if the problem were fixed, what would it look like? This would be your desired outcome.

I want grades of C or better on a grading rubric that describes minimum, above average, excellent, and unacceptable level of achievement on the assignment.
I also want a positive student perception of the assignment.

Step Two: Identify Elements

Describe three elements about the important desired outcome you wrote about in Step One.

- Start by writing the outcome from Step One in the outcomes box.
- Describe a learning activity you use to get the outcomes you want.
- Describe any technology or tools you use to facilitate the learning activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Learning Activity</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threaded discussion in assigned groups</td>
<td>Collaborative group work to develop a business memo designed to achieve a change in practice</td>
<td>Grades of C or better on my grading rubric. Positive student perceptions of the assignment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step Three: Ask Assessment Questions

Now you have identified elements. Decide on what questions you need to ask so you can determine what it is about each of the elements that is working and not working.

A. Ask questions about each of the elements themselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Learning Activity</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tools being used to support learning activity</td>
<td>A learning activity including use of best practices</td>
<td>What you expect to see that would indicate good results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions that help find out if the technology is working</td>
<td>Questions that help find out if/how the activity is working</td>
<td>Questions that determine if the outcome is occurring and how you will assess it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Element 1 – Ask questions to find out if the technology or tool is working well?

Think of what could go wrong or not work for the student, or what could work well? This should guide you in developing questions about how the technology works for students.

**Write questions about how the technology is working for the students.**

1. Do students have the skills to use threaded discussion?
2. Do students have necessary equipment to use threaded discussion?
3. Did the students use the technology?

Element 2 – Ask questions to find out if the learning activity and best practice is working well?

Think about the learning activity. Think of what could go wrong or not work for the students or what could work well? This should guide you in posing questions about how the activity works for students.

**Write questions about how the activity is working for the students.**

1. How often do the students interact in threaded discussions?
2. Are all group members participating?
3. Do students understand assignment directions?
4. Are discussions focused on the assignment task?
Element 3 – Ask questions to find out if the outcomes are happening as you had intended?

Think about the outcome. Image what outcomes you would like to see. Also think how you will assess them.

Write questions that determine if the outcome is occurring and how you will assess it.

1. What is the quality of the memos? (Assessed by grading)
2. What are students’ perceptions about the assignment? Ask the students.
3. Check threaded discussion in WebCT. Who is participating, and what is the quality of the participation?

B. Ask Questions about the Links between Elements.

Now it’s time to examine the technology or tool that helps the learning activity and how the learning activity leads to outcomes you desire.

Link One

Ask questions about how the technology or tool facilitates or enhances the learning activity (or practice).

Think about how students are using the technology in the learning activity. To guide you in developing questions, think about what could work well with the activity and what could interfere with the learning or just not work well enough.

Write questions about how the technology might be influencing the learning activity.

A. Was using threaded discussion effective for working in a group?
**Link Two**

Ask questions about how the learning activity/best practice works to result in your desired outcomes. Think about how the activity is leading students to the outcomes you want. Students may be doing the activity you planned, but it doesn't seem to lead to the outcomes you had in mind. How does what they are doing in the learning activity help them to achieve the outcomes you want?

<table>
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<th>Outcomes</th>
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**Write questions about how the learning activity shapes or leads to the outcomes you want to see.**

1. Did working with others help students understand the assignment?
2. In what ways are students' interactions focused on achieving the task?
3. How did working with others help students design the memo?

**Step Four: Get Answers to Your Questions**

Decide about ways to get answers to your questions and collect the data.

- When you are deciding about ways to get answers, select the most accurate, valid data source—the source that will yield the best information.
- Use data you already have that answer the questions;
- Determine what data you need to get in order to answer the questions;
- Design your own survey items or interview; and/or
- Select questions from Flashlight;
- Write your questions in the question column and decide on the best ways to get answers.
### Element 1 – Is the technology/tool working?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Ways to get answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do students have the skills for using threaded discussion?</td>
<td>Survey question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do students have necessary equipment to use threaded discussion?</td>
<td>Survey question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the students use the technology?</td>
<td>Survey question and – assess threaded forums</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Element 2 – Is the activity working?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Ways to get answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do the students interact in threaded discussions?</td>
<td>Assess discussion forums – count entries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are all group members participating?</td>
<td>Assess forums and ask survey questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do students understand assignment directions?</td>
<td>Assess forums – are students asking questions indicating they don’t understand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the discussions focused on assignment task?</td>
<td>Assess forums frequency on/off task</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Element 3 – Is the outcome occurring, and how are you going to assess for it?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Ways to get answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the quality of the memos? Assessed by grading rubric</td>
<td>Use grading rubric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are students’ perceptions about the assignment?</td>
<td>Survey item – teacher made</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Link 1 – How does the technology (or practice) facilitate the activity?

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Was using threaded discussion effective for working in a group?</td>
<td>Survey question</td>
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</table>

### Link 2 – How does the activity foster the outcome?

<table>
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<th>Ways to get answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did working with others help students understand assignment?</td>
<td>Survey question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what ways are students’ interactions focused on achieving the task?</td>
<td>Check discussion forums for task focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did working with others help students design the memo?</td>
<td>Survey question</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step Five: Analyze Data Decide about Improvement

Now start developing/selecting your questions, get the answers, analyze your data.

- Decide what’s working – the technology, the activity, the outcomes, the links?
- What’s not working?
- What do you want to do about the outcomes?