

# Collecting High Quality Outcome Data, Part 1

## Reviewing an Instrument: School Attachment Questionnaire

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### Special Note

This skill building activity can be used to apply the concepts and principles covered in this module to real world situations.

### Introduction

This exercise allows learners to review a questionnaire designed to measure “school attachment” to identify questions that measure specific dimensions of school attachment and to critique instrument shortcomings. (An improved version of the school attachment questionnaire and a checklist for reviewing instruments is included on pages 9-10 for distribution to learners after they complete the exercise.)

Trainers can choose to handle the material as two separate exercises, one on identifying outcome dimensions and one on identifying issues/problems with the design, layout, and wording of the questionnaire. In that case, they may want to reformat the worksheet on page 4 as two separate worksheets.

Some learners may find fault with particular questions or other features of the School Attachment Questionnaire. The intent is to present learners with an instrument that, when used appropriately, can generate high-quality data. Learners should be reminded that even the best instruments have their limitations and are not going to be a perfect fit for all programs and circumstances.

### Key Points – Definitions

A **data source** is any person, group, or organization that has information on whether the intended outcome occurred.

A **method** is a process or set of steps one follows to systematically collect performance measurement data.

An **instrument** is a paper or electronic form used to record information from a data source.

### Sticking Points and Common Issues

Below are some issues that may come up as learners consider the material, along with notes on how to respond to these issues.

*How do I know if it is more appropriate to measure attitude, knowledge, behavior, or condition for my intervention?*

Review your theory of change (for more on theory of change, see module 2, “Designing Effective Action

for Change”). Your theory of change drives the selection of appropriate outcomes to measure. The outcome you choose to measure should address the need/problem identified in your theory of change in a substantial and meaningful way. Your theory of change should also demonstrate a logical connection between the intervention and the outcome you choose to measure. If you find that you have more than one reasonable choice for outcome measurement, consider what would be the most important change that you can measure. As a general rule, changes in behavior or conditions are more important to measure than changes in attitudes or knowledge. It also helps to be mindful of your program’s resources, capacities, and limitations.

*What do I do if I cannot collect data from the preferred data source?*

If you cannot get data from your preferred data source, then consider all the alternatives. Start by making a list of anyone else who might have information relevant to the outcome. Consider what each alternative data source is likely to know (and not know), their strengths and weaknesses as a data source, and how they come to possess whatever information they have. For example, if you are not able to survey students to find out how they feel about school, you may be able to survey others who interact regularly with students to see what they know that’s relevant to your measurement question. For example, teachers may have information about how students feel about working in class and doing homework, as well as how they feel towards their classmates and the teacher. Parents know how students feel about going to school and doing homework. Finally, if you are using a national performance measure that stipulates reliance on a particular data source, then you should rely on that data source.

*When should the program administer the School Attachment Questionnaire?*

Some learners may have questions about the most appropriate timing to administer the School Attachment Questionnaire. In particular, it may not be entirely clear to some learners how early in the school year students should be given the pretest if there are concerns that students might not have formed opinions about their school experience. As a general rule, pretests should always be administered before program participation begins. Otherwise, pretest results may become contaminated from exposure to the intervention. In the scenario presented here, it is reasonable to assume that students are targeted for participation in the program because they are known to have a history of weak school attachment as demonstrated by a combination of absenteeism, disciplinary reports, and poor academic performance. The posttest would be administered at the end of the school year.

*Am I required to use the instruments that the Corporation has provided for national performance measures?*

If you are using national performance measures, then you are required to abide by the Corporation’s performance measures instructions. You are not obligated to use the sample instruments available at <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/npm/home>, but you are strongly encouraged to familiarize yourself with the sample instruments that are available for any national performance measure you select. These sample instruments can be modified as needed to fit your context, or you can use your own instruments. In either case, the instrument you use must capture the same key data elements as the sample instrument. The sample instruments are based on the requirements identified in the performance measurement instructions.

## Exercise

Instructions: Read the scenario below and follow the instructions for reviewing the instrument on pages 5-6. A blank copy of the exercise tables is also available on page 7 for learners to use with their own instruments.

### Program Scenario and Background Information

This intervention serves students in grades 6-8 who demonstrate weak attachment to school, including:

1. Feelings about being in school
2. Interest in learning
3. Attitudes towards teachers
4. Attitudes towards other students

Students participate in mentoring three times per week with sessions lasting at least one hour. Students participate in the program for 15 weeks. Each student is matched with a young adult mentor who helps them with homework and helps to mediate relationships between the student and others in the school through one-on-one meetings and group activities emphasizing cooperation. Mentors employ strategies to promote open and positive communication between mentored students, teachers, and other students.

For outcome measurement, the program administers a questionnaire to student participants at the beginning and end of the program (pre-post) to assess changes in students' attitudes towards being in school and engaging in learning, in changes in their relationships with teachers and other students.

The *School Attachment Survey* uses measurement scales that have been tested and reported on in research publications focusing on school attachment and related topics. The survey includes questions addressing students' feelings about being in school and engaging in the learning process, students' feelings towards teachers and peers, and their feelings about how rules and discipline are implemented in their school.

### Exercise

Using the School Attachment Survey on pages 5-6 and the tables on the next page, identify which questions appear to address specific dimensions of the intervention. Match questions with outcome dimensions by writing the number of each question in one of the spaces in the right-hand column of the table. If a question does not appear to fit into any of the identified dimensions then put the number for that question in the row for "questions not matching an identified outcome dimension."

Outcome Dimensions	Survey Questions (question numbers)
Feelings about being in school	
Interest in learning	
Attitudes towards other students	
Attitudes towards teachers	
<i>Questions not matching an identified outcome dimension</i>	

**Identify any additional issues or problems with the design, layout, and wording of the questionnaire.**

Issue or Problem	Question number(s) that exhibit the issue or problem; explanation
Positioning of text or graphics	
Crowding of questions or response options	
Response scales	
Biased or “leading” questions	
Double-barreled questions	
Abstract questions (that can be made more concrete)	
Using fill-ins where checkboxes or a scale could be used	
Inappropriate question for pretest/posttest	

## School Attachment Questionnaire

The questionnaire contains various statements about your school life. Please put an "X" in the box that best reflects how you feel about each statement most of the time. Your responses are strictly confidential. Please answer all the questions as completely and honestly as you can. Thank you for your participation!



	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I like school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Most mornings I look forward to going to school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I am proud to be at this school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I don't feel safe in my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I can be myself at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Doing well in school is important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I care if my homework is done correctly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Most of my classes are important.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Don't you agree that school is boring?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. My grades matter to me a lot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Don't you believe it is important to work hard at school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. My classmates often annoy me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I get along well with the other students in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I am liked by my classmates.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I rarely feel lonely at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I have many friends at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I don't care what my teachers think of me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I get along with most of my teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please continue to next page.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Slightly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
19. I want to be respected by my teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. I usually like my teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. My teachers care a lot about me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. I have lots of respect for my teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. School rules and the grading system are fair.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. The rules at my school are applied fairly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

25. What grade are you in?

6<sup>th</sup> grade  7<sup>th</sup> grade  8<sup>th</sup> grade

26. Do you enjoy the mentoring program?

27. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your school life?

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Skill Building Exercise #3 – Reviewing an Instrument: School Attachment Questionnaire

Questionnaire Type:  Pre  Post  
Reverse coded questions: 4, 10, 13, 18

ID: \_\_\_\_\_

**Use the tables below to review your own instrument. Add rows as needed.**

Name of instrument: \_\_\_\_\_

Outcome Dimensions (list)	Question ID Number(s)
<i>Questions not matching an identified outcome dimension</i>	

**Additional issues or problems with the design, layout, and wording of the instrument**

Issue or Problem	Question number(s) that exhibit the issue or problem; explanation
Positioning of text or graphics	
Crowding of questions or response options	
Response scales	
Biased or “leading” questions	
Double-barreled questions	
Abstract questions (that can be made more concrete)	
Using fill-ins where checkboxes or a scale could be used	
Inappropriate question for pretest/posttest	
Other Issues (specify)	



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## Answer Key and Points to Consider

Here are the answers to the exercise.

Outcome Dimensions	Survey Questions (question numbers)
Feelings about being in school	1-5
Interest in learning	6-11
Attitudes towards other students	12-16
Attitudes towards teachers	17-22
<i>Questions not matching an identified outcome dimension</i>	23-24

Identify any additional issues or problems with the design, layout, and wording of the questionnaire.

Issue or Problem	Question number(s) that exhibit the issue or problem; explanation
Positioning of text or graphics	Positioning the pencil graphic directly over the “strongly agree” column may inadvertently encourage students to mark this response more than others.
Crowding of questions or response options	Question 25: Response options are crowded. Questions 26 and 27: Not enough space for written response.
Response scales	The scale changes on the second page, where the label for the middle category changes from “neutral” to “undecided”.  The scale on the second page is also unbalanced. The lack of balance occurs by changing the response category from “disagree” to “slightly disagree.”
Biased or “leading” questions	Questions 9 and 11
Double-barreled questions	Question 23
Abstract questions (that can be made more concrete)	Question 26: Can be made more concrete, e.g., “Would you recommend the mentoring program to other students?”
Using fill-ins where checkboxes or a scale could be used	Question 26: Can use scaled response options, such as “yes,” “no,” and “no opinion.”
Inappropriate question for pretest/posttest	Question 26: Not well-designed for a pre-post questionnaire. The question posed by this question is premature for a pretest, and should be posed only on the posttest (and phrased in the past tense).

## Skill Building Exercise #3 – Reviewing an Instrument: School Attachment Questionnaire

The questionnaire on the following two pages shows how the instrument looks when all these problems are cleaned up. Trainers can distribute this document to learners after they complete the exercise.



## School Attachment Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of various statements about your school life. Please put an “X” in the box that best reflects how you feel about each statement most of the time. Your responses are strictly confidential. Please answer all the questions as completely and honestly as you can. Thank you for your participation!

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I like school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Most mornings I look forward to going to school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I am proud to be at this school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I don't feel safe in my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I can be myself at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Doing well in school is important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I care if my homework is done correctly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Most of my classes are important.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. School is boring.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. My grades matter to me a lot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I work hard at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. My classmates often annoy me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I get along well with the other students in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I am liked by my classmates.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I rarely feel lonely at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I have many friends at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I don't care what my teachers think of me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I get along with most of my	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Skill Building Exercise #3 – Reviewing an Instrument: School Attachment Questionnaire

teachers.					
19. I want to be respected by my teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please continue to next page.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
20. I usually like my teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. My teachers care a lot about me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. I have lots of respect for my teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

23. What grade are you in?

- 6<sup>th</sup> grade     7<sup>th</sup> grade     8<sup>th</sup> grade

24. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your school life?

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Questionnaire Type:  Pre     Post

Reverse coded questions: 4, 10, 13, 18

ID: \_\_\_\_\_

