



# Action Research As A Strategy to Improve Student Learning

## SESSION 1: Problem Identification



**“The outstanding characteristics of the professional teacher is a capacity for autonomous professional self development through systematic self study, through the study of the work of other teachers and through the testing of ideas by classroom research procedures”**

**(Lawrence Stenhouse)**



- Welcome and Introductions
- Participant Information Forms
- What is Action Research?
- Expectations
- Talking about your question
- How to access more information!

# The Facilitators...



- Provide information on implementation and use of action research.
- Provide support during the process.
- Prepare a final report containing all projects.
- Provide supply coverage.

# Overview of Sessions...

## Session 1:

**Action Research as a Strategy to Improve Student Learning**

## Session 2: Tools to Collect Data

## Session 3:

**Support Session**

# Overview of Sessions...

**Session 4:** Making Sense of the Data

**Session 5:** Writing the Report

**Session 6:**  
**Wrap Up**

# Participant Information Forms...

**What are your main  
concerns about Action  
Research?**

# What You Will Learn...

- ✓ How to ask focused questions.
- ✓ How to define your terms.
- ✓ What methods to use to yield valid and reliable results.
- ✓ How to collect relevant data.
- ✓ How to analyze data.
- ✓ How to summarize your findings and share with colleagues.

# At The End of This Session...

## YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

- Identify your research purpose and objectives.
- Identify methods to obtain more information on your topic of interest.
- Identify the main components of the final report.

# What Is Action Research...

It's a natural way of acting and researching at the same time.

“...With the exception of well-practiced tasks there is a natural rhythm to the way most of us behave. We do something. We check if it worked as expected. If it didn't, we analyze what happened and what we might do differently. If necessary we repeat the process.”



# Why AR...

**Teachers who want to take on research for the purpose of improving practice.**

- ✓ To improve your teaching.
- ✓ To test the assumptions of an educational theory.
- ✓ Means to evaluating and implementing whole school priorities.

# AR Is NOT...

- ❑ **The usual things teachers do when they think about teaching.**
  - ✓ **It is systematic and involves collecting evidence on which to base rigorous reflection.**
  
- ❑ **JUST problem solving.**
  - ✓ **It is also problem posing.**

# AR Is NOT...

## ❑ **Research on other people.**

- ✓ **It is research by particular people on their own work in order to help them to improve what they do.**

## ❑ **The scientific method applied to teaching.**

- ✓ **It is a systematically evolving process of changing both the researcher and the situations in which he or she works.**



# Example 1...

Jeremy is a student in a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class. Without any warning, Jeremy frequently inexplicably jumps up out of his desk with a loud roar, swipes all the papers off his desk, and then tips the desk over. The teacher manages to get him to the nurses office while his classmates patiently straighten out his things. In spite of their practiced efficiency, a half-hour often passes before the teacher can settle the class again. Totally frustrated with the loss of teaching time and the months it may take for Special Education referrals, the teacher decides to use Action Research to help find a solution for her classroom.

# Example 1...

## Step 1: The Question



“What upsets Jeremy?”

# Example 1...

Step 1: The Question

## Step 2: Data Collection



The problem may originate in the home, or in the playground or within his psychological make-up.

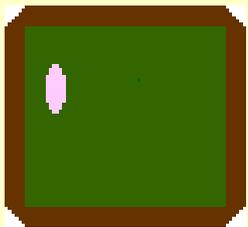
Knowing this, how does that help in the classroom?

# Example 1...

Step 1: The Question

Step 2: Data Collection

**Step 3: Data Analysis**



Looking over the data to find patterns.

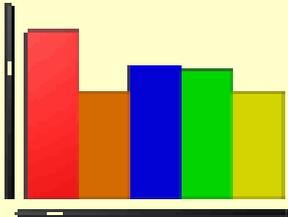
# Example 1...

Step 1: The Question

Step 2: Data Collection

Step 3: Data Analysis

**Step 4: Findings**



Jeremy erupted when she passed out work on new concepts.

# Example 1...

Step 1: The Question

Step 2: Data Collection

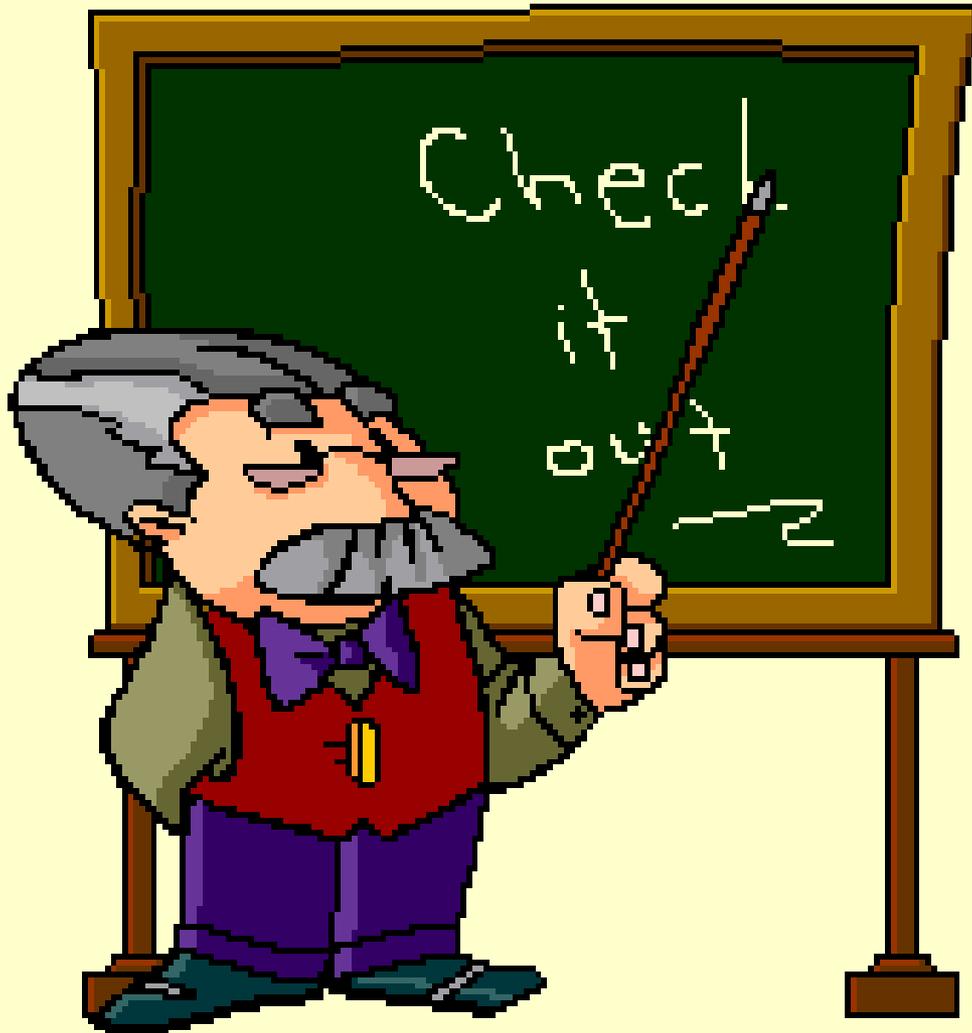
Step 3: Data Analysis

Step 4: Findings

**Step 5: Action Plan**

Create a fun assignment while handing out material to the rest of the class.

# Example 1...



**ALWAYS  
EVALUATE YOUR  
SOLUTIONS!**



## Example 2...

A middle school teacher, sitting in her staff lounge casually thumbing through a magazine, found an article citing research which alleged that high school dropouts make their decisions to quit school during their middle school years. The teacher could not get the allegations out of her mind, repeatedly asking herself, “How does that happen?” and “What do we do?” She, too, decided to implement an action research process to investigate these burning questions.

# Example 2...

## Step 1: The Question



“What can this school do to make the transition from elementary to middle school more user friendly?”

# Example 2...

Step 1: The Question

## Step 2: Data Collection



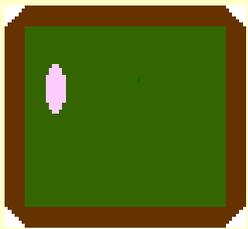
Constructed a simple survey asking about various student experiences during students' transition time which she administered with her own grade 6 class.

# Example 2...

Step 1: The Question

Step 2: Data Collection

**Step 3: Data Analysis**



Read through surveys looking for themes and tallied the number of responses under each theme.

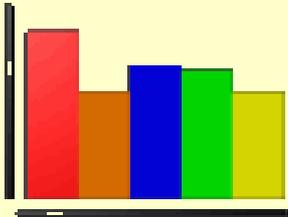
# Example 2...

Step 1: The Question

Step 2: Data Collection

Step 3: Data Analysis

**Step 4: Findings**



Overwhelmed by the social challenge of being relatively anonymous in a large school setting.

# Example 2...

Step 1: The Question

Step 2: Data Collection

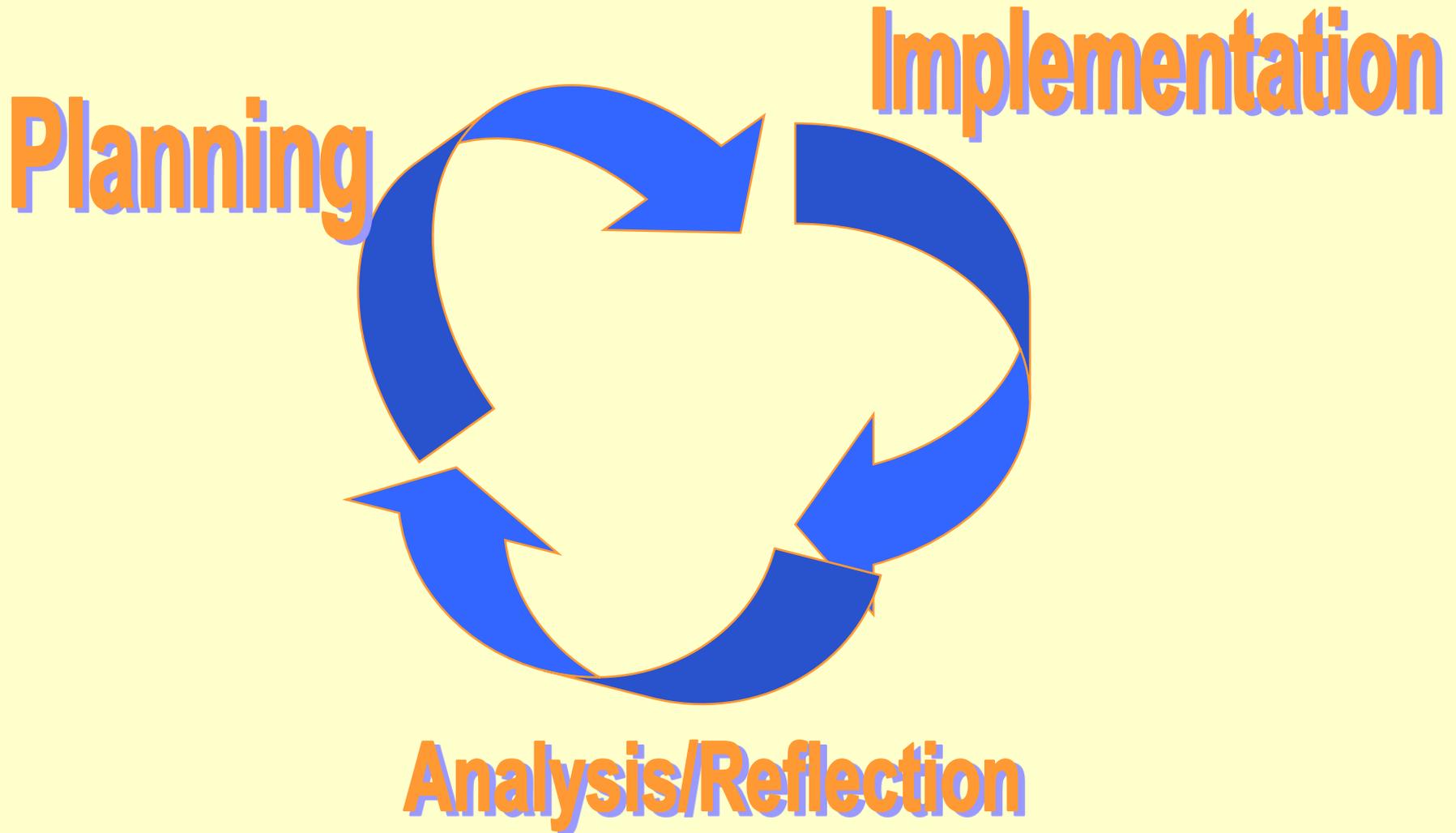
Step 3: Data Analysis

Step 4: Findings

**Step 5: Action Plan**

Developed multiple plans to address student concerns followed by annual surveys to track success.

# The AR Cycle...



# Benefits of AR...

Action Research allows you to evaluate your own teaching practices because **teachers**:

-  **Identify the problem**
-  **Choose the question**
-  **Collect and analyze the data**
-  **Develop the action plans**

No other evaluation process in place allows you to evaluate your own teaching practices like Action Research!

# The Values of AR...

- ❖ We work best on problems we have identified ourselves.
- ❖ We become more effective when encouraged to examine our own work and consider ways of doing things differently.
- ❖ We work better collaboratively.
- ❖ AR is a form of professional development.

# The Values of AR...

- ❖ AR provides opportunities to share discoveries.
- ❖ Promotes you as a teacher taking responsibility for your actions.
- ❖ Creating a more energetic and dynamic classroom environment in which teaching and learning can occur.

# Research Awards...

## Action Research recognized in teaching excellence

- Roy C. Hill Awards Program (\$2,500-10,000)
- Ontario Educational Research Council Awards (\$250 + publication opportunity)
- W.B Jackson Award for partnerships in Educational Research (\$250 + publication)
- J. Douglas Ayers Award (\$1,000)

(<http://www.opsba.org/>)

# Expectations...

## What is expected of Action Research Participants?

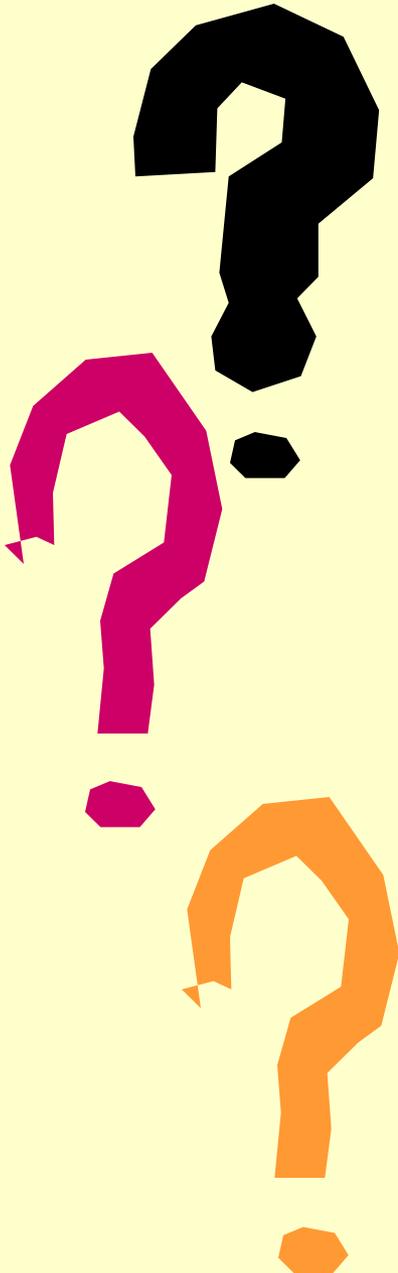
- Attend sessions
- Request help when required
- Complete 2-3 page final report

# The Final Report ...

**Due May 6, 2005 (2-3 pages)**

- Title
- Author and Affiliation
- Question or Problem/Issue
- Background
- Data Collection Methods and Analysis
- Results and Findings
- Reflections and Action
- Suggestions for Future Research
- Extra Attachments

# Your Burning Question...

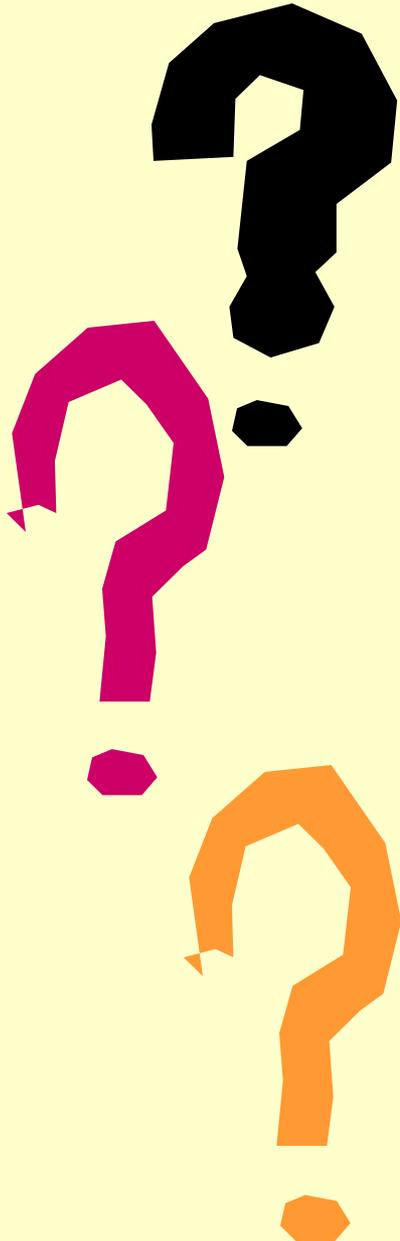


Important to find a **FOCUS** or **OBJECTIVE** for your research

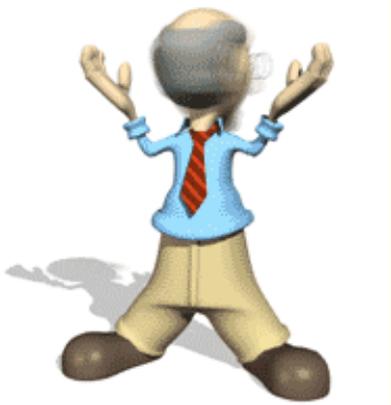
# A Good Question Is...

- ★ Simple.
- ★ Focused.
- ★ You can measure it (either qualitatively or quantitatively).
- ★ Usually “how” “what” or “why” questions.
- ★ Generates findings you can ACT on!
- ★ Modest and manageable.

# Your Burning Question...



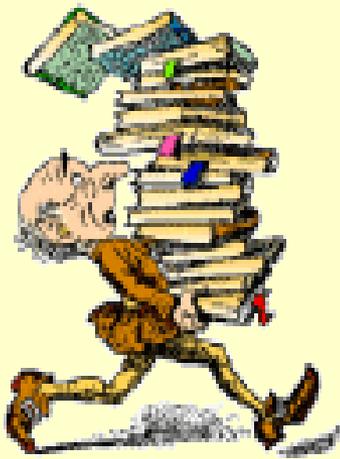
**In order to do this, need to  
clearly define the problem**



# Defining Your Problem...

Create problem statement(s) that clearly and concisely answers the following questions:

1. Who is affected?
2. Who/what is suspected of causing the problem?
3. What kind of problem is it? (grades, attendance, time, resources, etc)
4. What is the goal for improvement?
5. What are you proposing to do about it?



# Literature Reviews...

In order to get a sense of your topic, you will want to complete a review of the literature.  
The purpose is to:

- Give you ideas for your own project.
- Help to avoid “reinventing the wheel”.
- Help provide a context to your issue.

# For More Information...

- Search the Web (e.g., Google)
- Ontario College of Teachers: Margaret Wilson Library
- Search ERIC website:  
<http://www.eric.ed.gov/>
- Derry Byrne Resource Centre
- Libraries (U of O., Carleton)
- Other?

# Next Steps...

- Creating a Action Research Journal.
- Data collection techniques.
- Be thinking about what techniques you will use for your own study.
- Next session we will go over your questions, review techniques, work on your instruments!

# Need Help?



**Call us!**