The Social Change Quotient: Are We Doing Our Share?

Theories of Change: Moving from Outputs to Outcomes

Create a PATHWAY to Change

Heléne Clark

ActKnowledge

Making a Difference

How Do We Know If We Are Doing Our Share?

- We can talk about what we do in terms of how many people we reach
- We can talk about how people (or communities or policies) are different after we reach them

What We Did For People -- What Happened After We Did It?

Output

How many students attended our after-school program?

Outcome

How many students who attended our after-school program graduated?

Are outcomes and goals different?

Goal

Outcome

Impact

Result

Sometimes! Make sure you use consistently in your own work

HIPPY OUTCOMES

Outcomes are a Condition

- Children are healthy
- Children are ready for school
- Parents are literate

Reaching Outcomes is Hard

- They may not occur for a long time
- You may not be the only ones responsible
- Economic, cultural or political factors may hinder effectiveness

What Do We Do (usually)?

Create good programs and keep track of who we serve?

(outputs)

That can lead to some people getting good services

But, will it lead to lasting change?

What Can We Do?

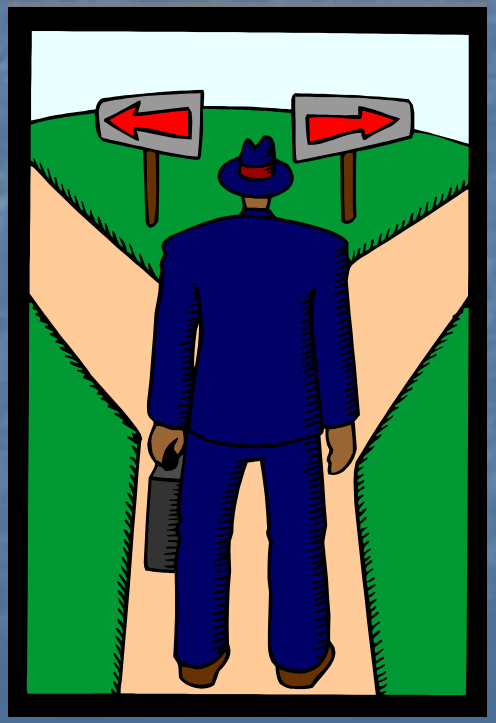
First, we can be very clear about what we believe needs to change

GET ORGANIZED!

We need a means to represent and keep-track of a lot of information. We need to know all the factors and barriers to change; we need to know how different sectors and levels of society interact; we need to know how the many parts of change work together.

WHY?

How Do You Know Which Programs and Activities Will Get You Where You Want to Go?



The Importance of Clear Goals

If we aren't sure WHERE WE WANT TO GO, our programs may not get us there, no matter how many people we serve!

So:

Start with the long-term goal you want for your community

e.g.

School readiness

Good health

Vibrant economy

But How Do We Get There?

Introduction to

THEORY OF CHANGE

(or, how to create pathways that work)

THEORY OF CHANGE

The set of beliefs that guides thinking about how and why a complex change process will unfold…

Theory of Change
Why Develop One?

- Participatory Process
- Creates realistic program expectations
- Creates a safe place to be reflective
- Can improve evaluation
- Allows others to understand what you are doing

OTHER ADVANTAGES

- Stakeholders are asked to be clear about their assumptions
- Gaps between steps and outcomes become evident
- Novel solutions may emerge
- The initiative is more likely to be effective

Plus…..

- Evaluations based on a theory carry more weight
- Evaluation plans and criteria are transparent to everyone
- A broader base of knowledge is created

You Start with Your Long-Term Goal

And,

Work Backwards

A good pathway (and a good theory of change) identifies:

- Where you want to go
- The route you will take to get there
- Why certain milestones are **necessary** steps in the path you will travel

And that is the kind of pathway you need to build to get to where you want to be in your community

Theory of Change Components

Change Framework

Outcomes, modeled in causal pathways

Interventions, modeled leading to the relevant Outcome(s)

Assumptions

Rationales

Indicators

Narrative

First, you need to know where you want to go

(and be specific)

Don’t settle for abstract GOALS

DEFINE THEM!

School Readiness?

For who? What does it mean to be ready?

What does it look like?

A good way to create your road map is to start with a well-defined long-term goal and then

work backwards

through
preconditions for getting to your ultimate goal

Create a PATHWAY to Change

PRECONDITIONS

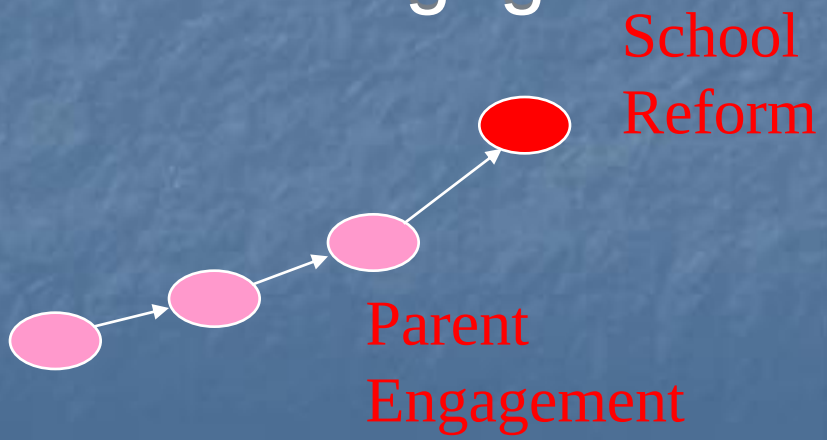
What HAS to change if the long-term goal is going to happen?

This helps you avoid doing things that are good, but don't get you where you want to go –

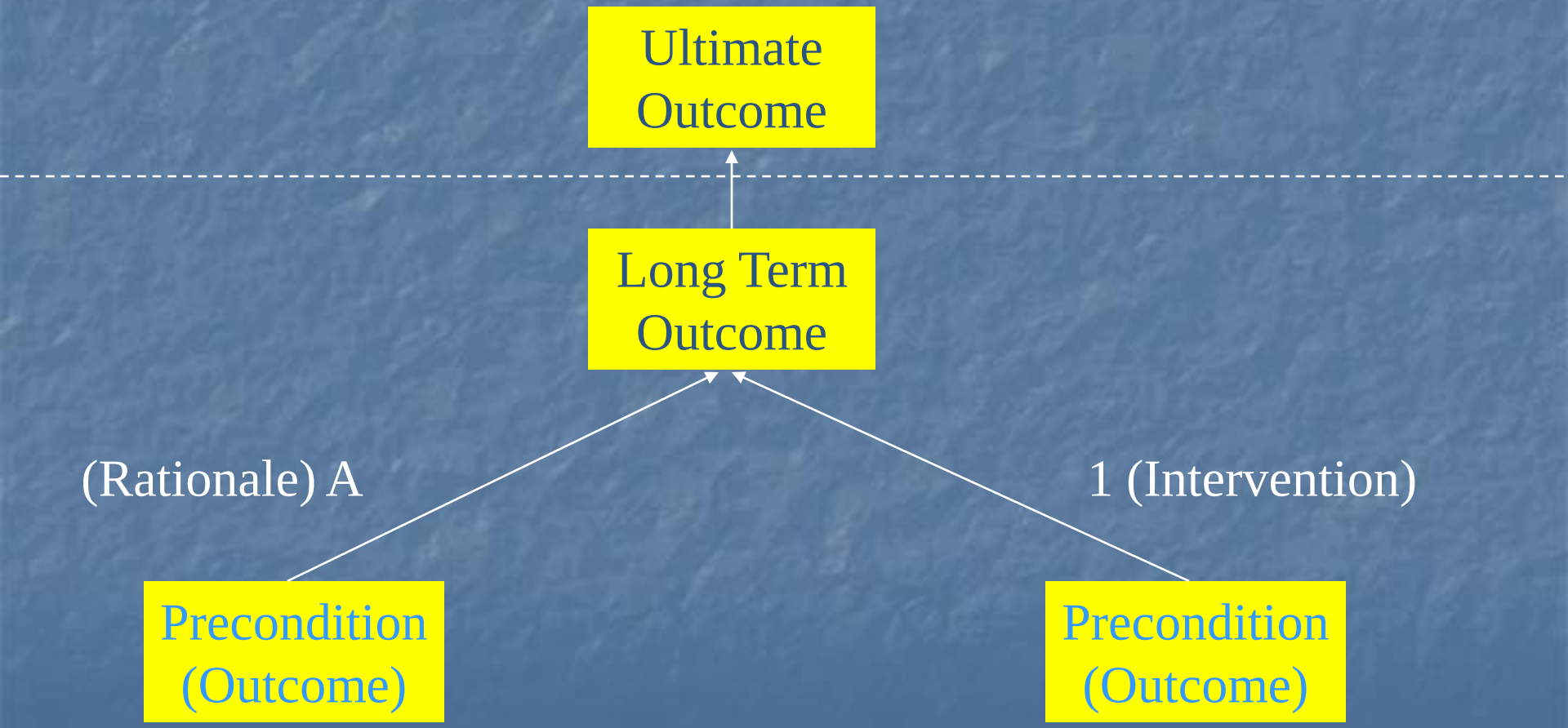
I didn't drive through Florida to get here from New York, even though it would be nice to go to Florida, it isn't the most efficient way to accomplish my goal of being here tonight!

Another example
Long-term Goal:
School Reform

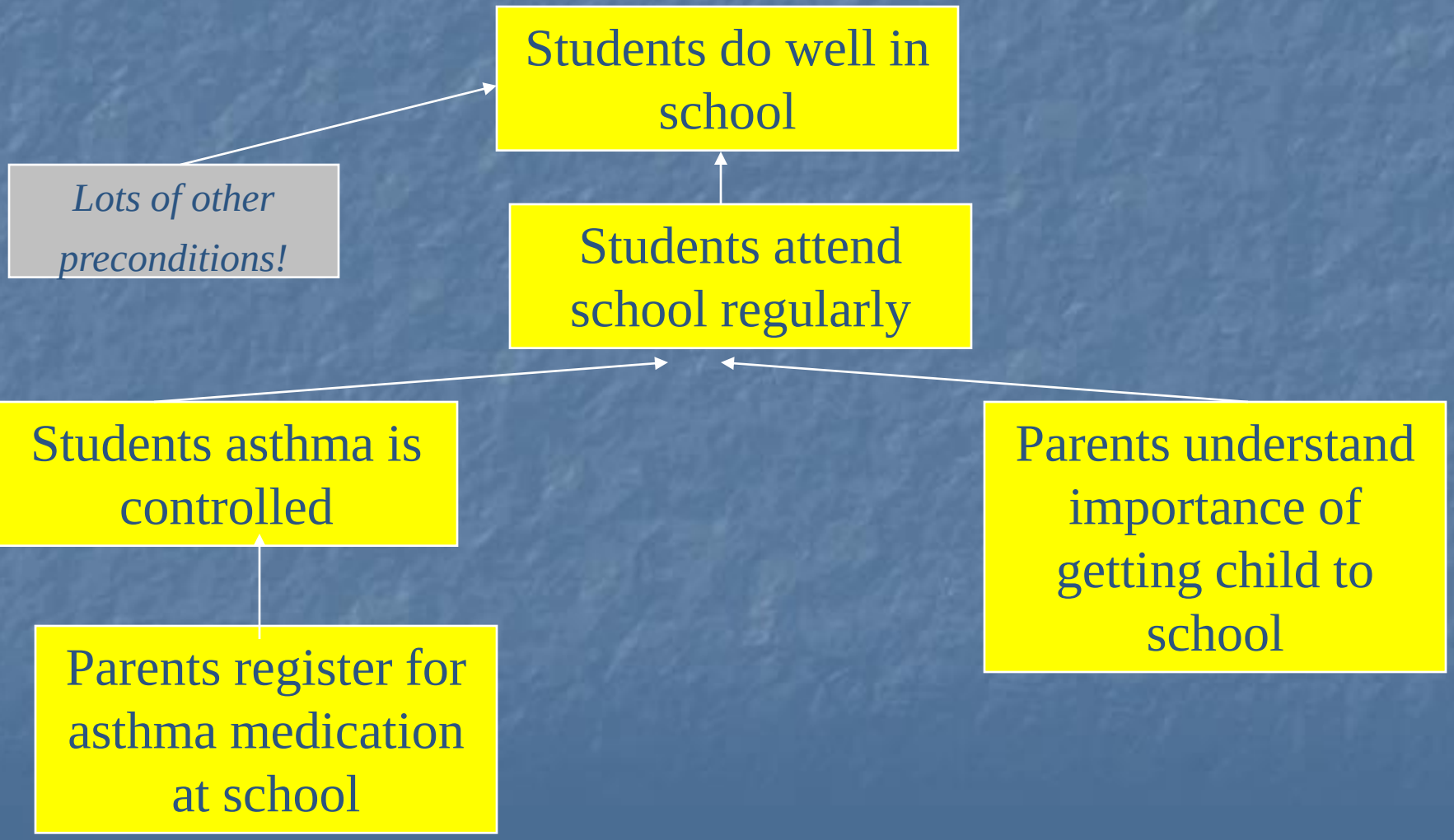
One possible precondition: Parent Engagement



Theory of Change Visual Language



Health Clinic in a School



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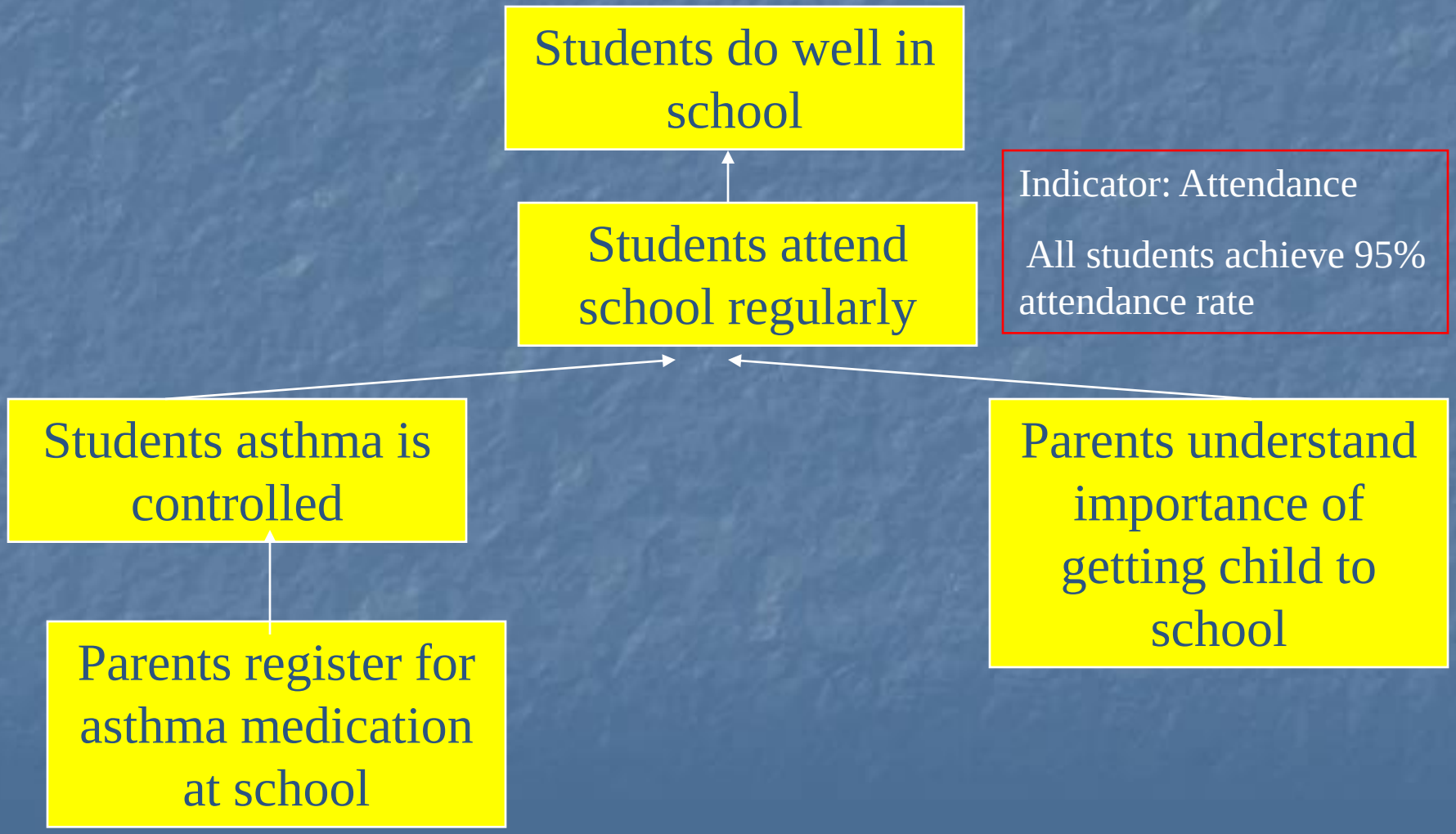

Participatory work to identify outcomes and how to achieve them is messy work,
but fun and exciting

OUTCOMES

After a lot of discussion, complex initiatives start to look manageable

Outcomes after discussing how change happens

How Do We Know If We Have a Good Theory?

- Plausibility
- Doability
- Testability

And, most of all, learn through your work and revise your theory with every lesson

Being clear about OUTCOMES is hard, but rewarding

- Activities planned to meet goals are more likely to be successful
- You can tell if you are on track
- You can show others you DO make a difference

Contact: Heléne Clark

Hclark@actknowledge.org