

# Assessing Program Outcomes by Utilizing Field Education Learning Activities and Skill Evaluations

## Introduction

- Using Learning Contracts in Field Practicum to Measure Program Outcomes
- Provides continuous feedback loop for multiple purposes:
  - Program Assessment
  - Student Learning and Engagement
  - Accreditation Review
  - University Level Review

## Supporting Research

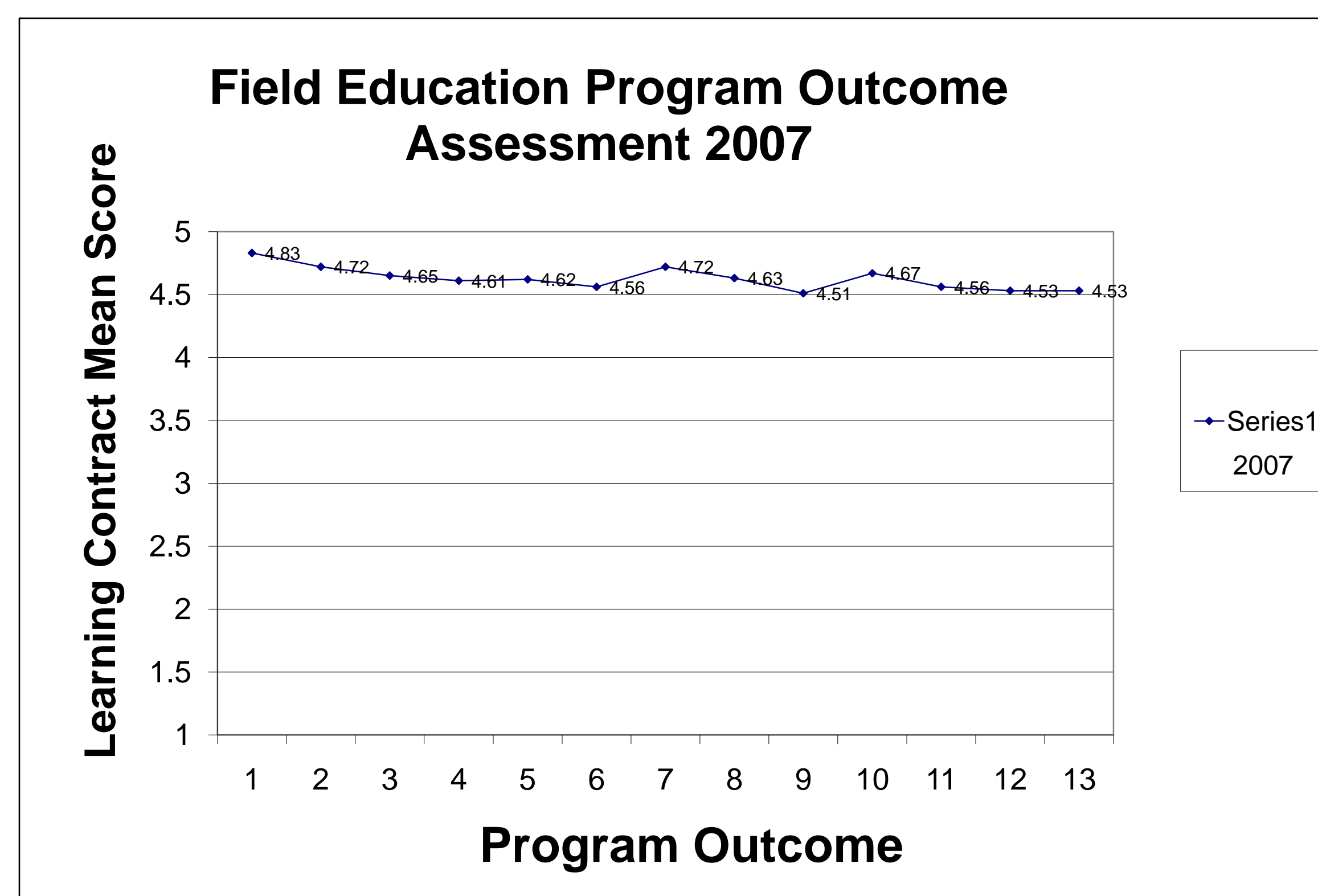
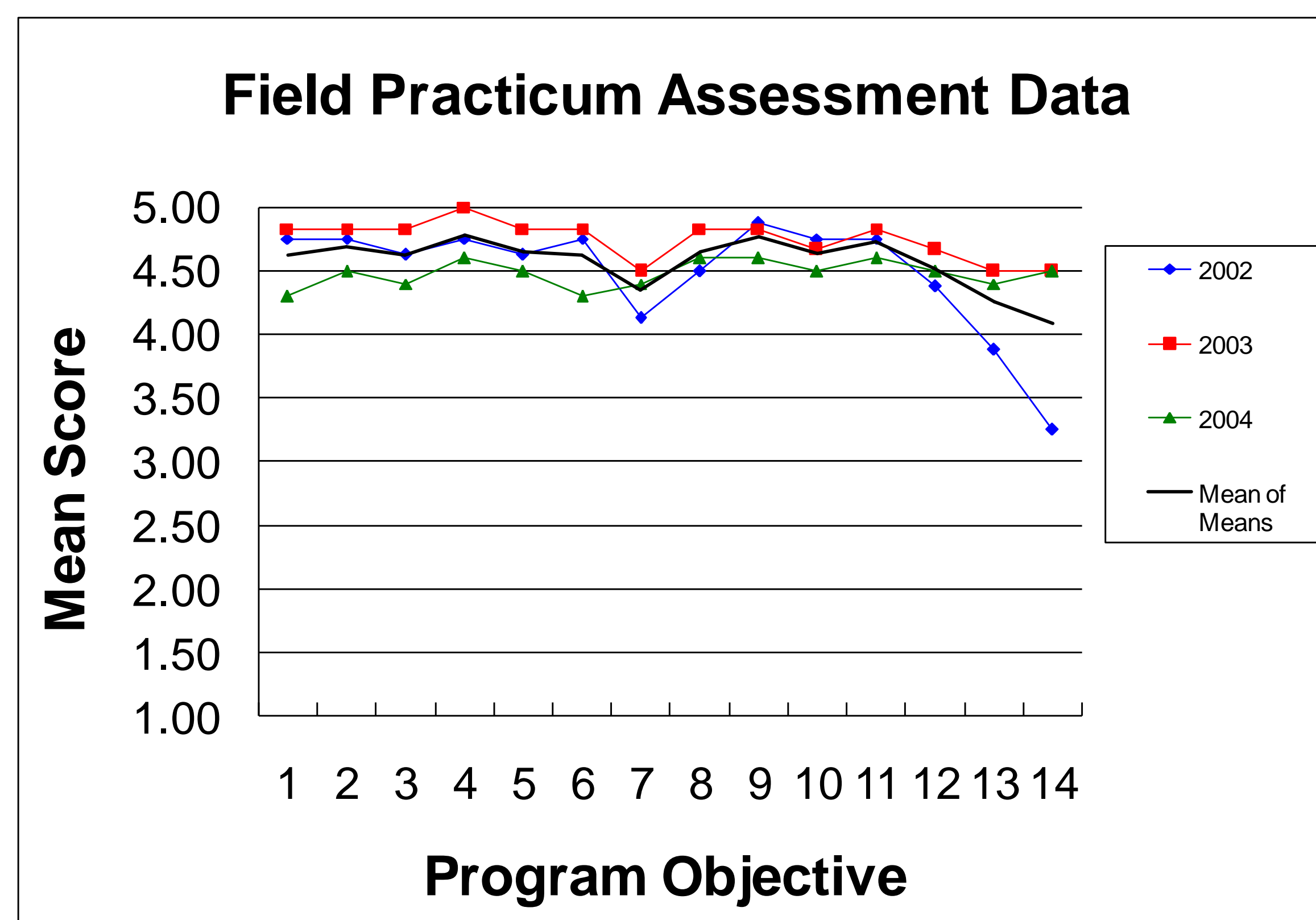
- Integration of Theory and Practice Loop (Bogo and Vayda, 2004)
- Links the general (program outcome) to the specific (learning activity) (Fink, L.D., 2003)
- Utilizes expertise, purpose, ideology and model of the agency setting to achieve learning outcomes (Birkenmaier, J., Berg-Weger, M. 2007)
- Educational Goals → Selection of Learning Activities → Focuses learning and teaching → Evaluation of Learning and Educational Outcomes (Bogo and Vayda, 2004)

## Purpose of Learning Contracts

- Focuses learning by specifying criteria and measurement.
- Indicates time frame for completion of activities and evaluation.
- Explicates roles and norms for participation of the partners in the field practicum.
- Articulates expectations for students.
- Indicates what constitutes success. (Bogo and Vayda, 2004)

## Learning Theory

- Adult learning theory promotes success of contracting. (Bogo and Vayda, 1993)
- Student becomes actively engaged in initiating own learning- Constructivist
- Student's needs and interests are central (Birkenmaier and Berg-Wegner, 2003)
- Contracts are developed in collaboration with student, faculty member, agency instructor.
- Students learn better by engaging with "more capable others". (Vygotsy, 1971)



## Method: The Learning Contract

- Quantitative and Qualitative measures.
- Measures skills, values, knowledge.
- Formative Evaluation – midterm.
- Summative Evaluation- final.
- Guides structure and provides road map to the field practicum experience.
- Written document
- Provides accountability to learning process and evaluation.

## Developing the Learning Contract

1. Goals identified
2. Objectives/Outcomes identified. (Use Program Outcomes)
3. Learning Activities developed to meet Outcomes.
4. Scale for evaluation.
5. Time Frame for Completion Specified

## Example of Learning Contract Skills Linked to Program Outcomes

- **Program Objective # 1: Use empirically based theories of bio/psycho/social/spiritual/cultural development to understand human behavior in the social environment with individuals, families, groups and communities.**
- **Skills on the Evaluation of Student Learning in Field Education (Learning Contract) linked to Program Objective # 1:**
  - 1e- Chooses approaches or interventions based on knowledge of appropriate theory and the individual, group or family system)
  - 1h- Demonstrates skills in working to improve and/or change the agency/community
  - 1i – Uses agency documentation formats (assessment tools, computer based recording, goal attainment scales, etc.).
  - 2b- Assists person to overcome stigmas and resistances.
  - 2c- Assesses and evaluates challenges related to diversity.
- **Scoring: 1= Absence of Development, 2= Below Average, 3= Average, 4= Above Average, 5= Excellent.**

## Limitations/Discussion

- Some concerned over contradiction between Humanist values and stating measurable behavioral/skill objectives.
- Agency may not fully understand goals/objectives of Program. Limits validity of learning activities to measure Program outcomes.
- Baseline for student learning not identified at beginning of practicum.

## References

- Bogo, M., Vayda, E. (1998) *The practice of field instruction in social work: Theory and process*. 2<sup>nd</sup>. Ed. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Birkenmaier, J., Berg-Wegner, M. (2007) *The practicum companion for social work: Integrating class and field work*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education Inc.
- Fink, D.L. (2003) *Creating significant learning experiences: An integrated approach to designing college courses*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
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- Vygotsy, L.S. (1971) *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. (M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, & E. Soubberman, Eds. And Trans.) Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.