

LSC Core Update

2000-2001 DATA COLLECTION

Spring Data Collection

It's that time of year again! By now, all projects should have received Principal Questionnaires, and their teacher interview samples. Projects that are scheduled to administer Teacher Questionnaires and conduct classroom observations should have received those samples, as well.

Questionnaire Response Rates

LSC projects have become increasingly adept at achieving the high response rates NSF requires (minimum 80% for teachers, 90% for principals). Keep up the good work! Let HRI know if you need additional copies of the questionnaires to send to non-respondents. Once you have completed the data collection, and no later than June 20, 2001, send HRI all of the questionnaires at one time.

Given that the questionnaires are so similar to last year's, we will have the cleaning and analysis codes ready to go as soon as the data collection period ends and you should get your results back well within a 30-day timeframe.

Observations and Interviews

There has been considerable variability among projects in success in interviewing and observing teachers. Some evaluators routinely observe/interview all or nearly all of the original sample, while others wind up contacting 15 or more teachers in order to collect data from 10. Especially in the case of classroom observations, which are now longitudinal, it is important to stick to the original sample as much as possible. While recognizing that contexts differ, NSF nevertheless looks on coop-

eration with the core evaluation as one of the indicators of the quality of the relationship the project has established with targeted teachers. PIs and evaluators can help garner cooperation by emphasizing to the teachers that the core evaluation looks at the project as a whole, not individual teachers, and that the purpose of the data collection is to determine if the project is succeeding in changing conditions in the schools.

Incentives

The system for providing incentives to observed teachers worked well last year, so we are using the same system again. Projects are given the choice of distributing "vouchers" that observed teachers can redeem for about \$25 worth of mathematics/science education materials or billing HRI \$25 for each completed classroom observation. In either case, additional observations beyond those required for the core evaluation *do not* figure into the incentive allotment.

Evaluator Responsibilities

The Lead Evaluator is a key person in the core evaluation. He or she is responsible for conducting at least 3 of the required 5-8 professional development observations each year, for supervising data collection activities, and for reporting the results both to the project and to HRI.

Some projects find a need to change Lead Evaluators as the project progresses, e.g., if the Lead Evaluator retires. Please note that your NSF Program Officer must approve your choice, even if the person is already serving as Lead Evaluator for another LSC project.

Lead Evaluators new to the LSC will need to participate in the New Proj-

ect Orientation Meeting, May 3 (evening) through May 5. Lead Evaluators who are already working on other LSC projects regardless of subject/grade range, need not attend that meeting.

Some projects may also wish to add classroom observers. Those who are new to the LSC, and those who are not yet certified for the subject/grade range of your project, need to participate in a two-day training session and demonstrate reliability in use of the Classroom Observation Protocol. The next classroom observation training will be in Washington, DC on May 2-3, just prior to the New Project Orientation Meeting. Another classroom observation training will be held in North Carolina in February 2002.

Projects working with evaluation firms are reminded that individuals, not the research group, as a whole, are trained and certified. It is the PI's responsibility to make sure that all professional development and classroom observations for the core evaluation are carried out by certified observers.

School Demographics

NSF needs data on the demographic characteristics of schools participating in the LSC as part of their annual report to Congress. PIs of "older" projects may recall that these data used to be collected via the Principal Questionnaire.

Quite a few PIs indicated that it would be easier for the project to get the data from district records, rather than asking each principal to provide that information. For that reason, and also to cover situations where principals did not return the question-

tant that projects provide complete demographic data each year; and NSF has asked HRI to send incomplete sampling frames back to the projects. If your project does not have access to school information through the districts, you will need to get that information directly from the schools.

“Final Year”

Data Collection

The core evaluation calendar runs from September 1 to August 31 each year. The longitudinal design of the core evaluation calls for fall data collection in the Baseline Year, Year Two, and the “Final Year” of each project. We have been defining “Final Year” for spring data collection as the spring following the last summer of professional development in order to collect impact data that reflects those efforts.

That definition of “Final Year” has proved problematic for some projects as it has in some cases entailed collecting data after the official end of their award. NSF has decided to allow projects to designate the final core evaluation spring data collection as *no earlier than* the last spring of their initial award period. Projects with no-cost extensions can choose whether to do the final data collection in the last spring of their initial award period or to delay it to a later year when all or almost all of the professional development has been completed.

Lead Evaluator Meeting

Lead evaluators met with HRI and NSF staff on January 8, 2001. The key focus was on reporting core evaluation results.

Evaluators had an opportunity to view simulated “low quality” reports, as well as excerpts from actual high-quality reports stripped of project-identifying information. High-quality reports were defined as those which

provide:

- A brief description of the project approach in a given area, such as deepening teacher content knowledge;
- An overall judgment of the quality/effectiveness of the project's activities in that area; and
- Evidence to support the evaluator's interpretations and conclusions, drawing from observations, interviews, and questionnaire data, as appropriate.

Some time was also devoted to classroom observation and professional development observation “refreshers,” as well as to refining the teacher interview coding process. The modification will allow HRI to provide NSF with quantitative as well as qualitative interview data on the quality and impact of the LSC.

Assessing the Effects of the LSC on Students

As you know, NSF is interested in documenting the effects of the LSC program—on district and school policies and practices; on teachers and teaching; and, ultimately, on students.

While the core evaluation provides information about effects at the district, school, teacher level, it does not address student outcomes. LSC projects have always been encouraged to look at the impact of their activities on students, and beginning with Cohort 5, projects are now required to do so. Recognizing that not all projects have the necessary expertise to conduct student assessment studies, NSF has arranged to provide technical assistance in research design to LSC projects.

A two-day conference held in North Carolina on January 9–10, 2001 was used to kick off the technical assistance efforts. Participants reviewed a draft of guidelines on conducting student impact studies; considered the information needs of their various stakeholders; and shared ideas

about appropriate assessment instruments. In addition, Diane Briars talked about the design of the Pittsburgh studies in relation to stakeholder information needs, and Diana Lambdin and Maryellen Harmon shared some perspectives on mathematics and science assessment, respectively.

The second day of the conference was devoted to work on designing student outcome studies. Members of the technical assistance team, led by Joy Frechtling of Westat, were available to assist projects as requested. HRI staff met separately with the science projects who are exploring the possibility of participating in a program-wide study of the effects of the LSC on students in grades 4–6.

Next Steps

- Science Program Study

As a follow up to the conference, HRI has contacted all K–8 science projects about piloting the Science Program Study instruments and procedures this spring. Westat is revising the guidelines based on feedback from conference participants and will notify projects when the revised guidelines have been posted on LSC-NET.

- Technical Assistance

NSF has contracted with Westat to provide technical assistance to help projects develop sound and useful designs for outcome evaluation. Although only Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 projects are required to undertake such activity, NSF would be pleased to receive outcome data from as many efforts as possible. Since this is a new activity and timelines for developing the designs are tight, Westat would like to begin work with projects as soon as possible. Projects interested in receiving such assistance should send a brief summary of their needs to their Program Officer and a copy to Joy Frechtling at Westat. She can be reached via e-mail (frechtj1@Westat.com). Her telephone number is (301) 517-4006.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q My “Final Year” data collection requirements indicate that 5–8 professional development observations are optional. What does “optional” mean?

A The requirements are worded this way to accommodate the fact that many projects have completed their professional development by the time the Final Year data are collected. If your project continues to hold professional development sessions during the final year, we ask that the Lead Evaluator conduct and submit observations to HRI.

Q Is it possible to arrange for members of the project staff, other than the PI and Lead Evaluator, to be copied on the correspondence we receive from HRI?

A Due to the large number of LSC projects, HRI is able to communicate with only one person on the project staff, in addition to the Lead Evaluator. Projects are asked to designate an individual known as the “PI Contact,” which may or may not be the PI. This person and the Lead Evaluator are included in the HRI correspondence list and are responsible for passing on any necessary information provided by HRI to other members of the project staff, such as co-PIs or administra-

FAREWELL

tive assistants.

Farewell to Susan Snyder

Susan Snyder, who was one of the major forces behind the LSC initiative, retired from NSF at the end of January 2001. Thank you, Susan, for your vision, energy, and commitment to improving mathematics and science education. You will be missed!

Susan has indicated she would like to keep in touch with the LSC community; she can be reached at:

Susan.P.Snyder@verizon.net

Changes to the Protocols

Professional Development Observation Protocol and Classroom Observation Protocol

There have been a number of wording changes to the LSC observation protocols in the 2000–2001 forms, which are minor. Observers should review these revisions prior to completing the protocol.

1999–2000 Version

2000–2001 Version

Professional Development Observation Protocol

Section Two: Ratings

- I.11. Adequate time and structure were provided for wrap-up and closure.
- VI.3. Interactions reflected *collaborative* working relationships among participants.
- VII.C. Level 1 Session is unlikely to enhance the capacity of participants to provide high-quality...
Level 2 ...but there are *substantial* problems in the design...
sign...
content, and/or implementation...
Overall, the session is *quite* limited...
Level 3 Professional development is purposeful, and at times effective, but there *some* weaknesses in the design,...

- Adequate time and structure were provided for wrap-up.
- Interactions reflected *collegial* working relationships among participants
- Level 1 Session is *highly* unlikely to enhance the capacity of participants to provide high quality...
Level 2 ...but there are *serious* problems in the design...
content, and/or implementation...
Overall, the session is *very* limited...
Level 3 Professional development is purposeful and at times effective, but there are *weaknesses, ranging from substantial*

tial content, or implementation... *to fairly minor*, in the design, content, or implementation...

Classroom Observation Protocol

Section One: Contextual Background and Activities

- IV.D. How did the adaptations affect the quality of the lesson? *design?*

How did the adaptations affect the quality of the lesson *design?*

Section Two: Ratings

- I.8. Adequate time and structure were provided for wrap-up and closure.
- III. 4. Teacher-*presented* information was accurate.
- V.B. Level 1 Instruction is unlikely to enhance...

- Adequate time and structure were provided for wrap-up.
- Teacher-*provided content* information was accurate.
- Level 1 Instruction is *highly* unlikely to enhance...

Dates to Remember



May 2–3, 2001

**Classroom Observation Training,
Washington, DC**

May 3–5, 2001

New Project Orientation Meeting

June 30, 2001

Questionnaires due at HRI

August 31, 2001

**End of 2000–2001 Data
Collection Year**

October 15, 2001

Due at HRI:

**Classroom Observation Protocols
Professional Development Observation
Protocols
Teacher Interview Data
Evaluation Report**

November 15, 2001

PI Annual Report Due at NSF

December 1, 2001

Annual LSC Core Evaluation Requirements

All Projects:

Professional Development Observations
(5–8 per year, 2–5 for Baseline, optional
for Final Year)
Principal Questionnaires
(population)
Individual Teacher Interviews
(10; not conducted Baseline Year)
Project Team Interviews

In addition, Baseline Year, Year

Two, and Final Year Projects:

Classroom Observations
(16 per subject; in 2000–2001 this will
vary)
Teacher Questionnaires
(300 per subject, plus program sample)

Most data collection activities are conducted
February–May annually, except Professional
Development Observations and the Project
Team Interviews, which may be conducted
throughout the data collection year (September
1–August 31).

**The PI is responsible for making
sure that core evaluation data are**

Contact Information

If you need help with any aspect of
the LSC Core Evaluation, please e-
mail Elizabeth Arnold at:

lsc@horizon-research.com

We prefer that you e-mail first. If a
follow-up call is needed, someone

How To Reach Us

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