

LSC Core Update

SPRING 2000 UPDATE

Gleaning Lessons From LSC Projects

As the LSC program enters its sixth year, NSF is particularly interesting in documenting the lessons learned. The first of a series of Lessons Learned Conferences was held on June 5th and 6th in Washington, DC. The purpose of the conference was to help NSF learn more about the successes and challenges of LSC projects.

A total of thirty PI/Evaluator teams attended the conference, participating in in-depth discussions on areas of interest to the LSC, including:

- Preparing and deploying professional development providers;
- Involving administrators;
- Involving the resistant teachers;
- Developing a supportive context for reform; and
- Sequencing and balancing content, pedagogy, and instructional materials in professional development.

A number of PIs presented in these areas, sharing lessons from their projects, followed by general discussion in small groups.

Thanks to all who attended for their openness and willingness to share their experiences in implementing an LSC. HRI will be compiling the information from the conference along with data from interviews conducted with PIs of ending projects. The hope is that this information will be helpful to current projects as well as to new projects facing similar issues in the future.

Studying the Impact of the LSC on Students

There is growing pressure on education initiatives to demonstrate their impact, particularly in regard to student achievement. Beginning in 1998, NSF incorporated into the solicitation for new LSC projects, the requirement that the project examine its impact on student achievement.

While student impact studies had not previously been required, many LSC projects have decided to conduct studies for their own purposes, and NSF asked HRI to inventory and describe these. Accordingly, PIs were asked to provide information about their assessment efforts and to name a person to be contacted for additional information. HRI subsequently interviewed the designated contacts and requested copies of completed student achievement studies.

The results of these interviews and a review of the documents highlighted a major dilemma in this area. Being sensitive to differences in local contexts, NSF intentionally put no restrictions or requirements on how projects should go about showing evidence of impact on students. This flexibility is both a strength, in that it allows projects to use a variety of types of evidence, and a weakness, in that each project has to expend time and resources in developing an appropriate strategy for assessing impact.

NSF decided to bring a small group together to discuss how to assess the impact of the LSC on student achievement, including issues related to both instrumentation and study design.

Each of the projects that sent a team to the Lessons Learned Conference was invited to have one representative stay for an assessment meeting the next day. Stimulated by presentations from the Pittsburgh mathematics and Delaware science projects, participants discussed both design and instrumentation issues, and generated ideas on how NSF could facilitate projects' efforts in these areas.

While many projects, both science and mathematics, indicated the need for assistance in designing appropriate studies, the discussions highlighted the differences in the nature of the instrumentation challenges for the two subjects.

Many mathematics projects are struggling with the fact that their mandated state and district assessments are not fully aligned with the goals of the LSC. Administering a "better" test is not the solution since the testing burden is already so high. Rather, projects need assistance on how to disaggregate the data to look separately at the impact of the LSC on "traditional" and "reform" outcomes

For science projects, there is often no state or district test; projects are willing to administer assessments, but they need help in locating appropriate items/tests. Participants expressed interest in the idea of a program-wide science study involving 2-3 classes per project, with individual projects having the option of testing additional classes to get project-level results.

NSF is exploring options for providing assistance to projects in assessing the impacts of the LSC on student achievement. Stay tuned!

DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITIES

1999–2000 Questionnaire Data and Composites

Data from teacher and principal questionnaires administered during spring 2000 data collection are being returned to projects as questionnaires arrive and are processed. Data files will be sent electronically via e-mail (or by disk, if requested) to the lead evaluator and PI. Both the lead evaluator and PI will be sent a hard copy of the questionnaire data tables and composites, along with composite definitions. Composite reliability figures will be available late in the summer, when all projects have sent their questionnaires for scanning and processing. Those projects administering the short version of the LSC Principal Questionnaire should note that they *will not* receive principal composites since the composite items were not included in the short version of the questionnaire.

Files were sent to lead evaluators early in the spring, providing the link between project ID and LSC ID for 2000. Teachers and principals are assured of confidentiality when they complete a questionnaire or agree to be observed, so we do not release these links to the PI or project staff.

1999–2000 Reporting Guidelines

The 1999–2000 Core Evaluation Reporting Guidelines are now available on the web. To find the reporting guidelines for your project, go to your project-specific lead evaluator website and click on the report listed. Copies of all versions of the reporting guidelines can also be found in the core evaluation Data Collection Manual posted on the web.

In the current core evaluation system, the level of effort required for reporting varies from year to year, with a greater effort required in Year Two and the Final Year. Projects not in Year Two or the Final Year are required only to submit ratings in the appropriate areas and provide a narrative rationale for their ratings. If you have any questions about the evalua-

tion or reporting guidelines, e-mail HRI.

PIs Able to Monitor Data Collection Progress

HRI's redesigned LSC website has a new section especially for PIs. In addition to information regarding a project's data collection requirements (with links to appropriate documents) for the current data collection year, the PI can call up a data collection summary. This summary will indicate how many observation and interview protocols the project evaluation team has submitted to date, both partial and complete. We hope this system will prove a useful tool for PIs in monitoring the progress of their projects' core evaluation data collection.

The LSC PI contact can access the PI section by using a PI-specific username and password. In order to receive this username and password, simply go to "Log-in Help" at the PI site to request that the username and password be e-mailed to the PI contact.

Changes to Supplementing the Core

For the past several years, projects have been able to apply for additional support from the core evaluation contract for supplementing the core evaluation—administering additional teacher questionnaires, conducting additional classroom observations, or documenting LSC reform at the school level. NSF has decided that in the future, all classroom observations and school documentation efforts should be carried out using project funds. Beginning in the 2000–2001 data collection year, the only "supplementing the core" option will be to request additional questionnaires. Projects that wish to explore the possibility of additional funding for evaluation/research activities should check with their NSF program officer.

2000–2001 Data Collection Requirements

Spring core evaluation data collection procedures will remain virtually the same for 2000–2001. Once again this fall, PIs will be asked to confirm their

data collection schedules, based on the projected end date of their project. Projects will then be able to go to the LSC web site (www.horizon-research.com/LSC) to view their data collection requirements for the year.

In conjunction with the Lessons Learned Conference, PIs of attending projects fine-tuned the Project Description form which will be completed on an annual basis by PIs. This form will provide HRI with information on the various project designs in the LSCs and will allow us to link strategies to teacher outcomes. PIs will be asked to complete the Project Description form in October when they accept their data collection schedule for the 2000–2001 data collection year.

Sampling Frames Now Due in Fall

As has been the case in previous years, all projects will be asked to update information on participating schools and teachers (and the treatment level of the latter). Again this year, two sampling frames will be required, one for schools and one for teachers.

The biggest change in the sampling frame guidelines will be the date they are due. NSF needs the information about teacher participation each fall so they can use this information as they make decisions about project continuation funding. Accordingly, instead of coding the professional development hours as of December 31, projects will use August 31 as the cut-off date, coinciding with the data collection calendar.

To facilitate this process, by mid-September HRI will return the project's 1999–2000 sampling frame "preformatted" for the project to update the appropriate fields. The submission deadline will be October 16, 2000. While this change was originally prompted by NSF's data needs, this earlier start will also enable HRI to draw samples and provide observation and interview lists earlier to facilitate spring data collection. If there are more than a few changes in teacher eligibility over the course of the fall semester, projects may wish to send HRI an updated file (**by Febru-**

2001 Core Evaluation Meeting/Training Dates

The Lead Evaluator Meeting will be held January 8–9, 2001 in Chapel Hill, NC. NSF has indicated that lead evaluators of all existing LSC projects are required to attend.

A classroom observation training is scheduled for February 8–9, 2001. This training, also to be held in Chapel Hill, is for any project that would like to have additional individuals certified to conduct classroom observations for the core evaluation. Details for both meetings will be sent to projects in November.

NEW LSC PROJECTS

New Projects

NSF has funded nine new LSC projects since the fall of 1999. They are:

- Elementary science
Charleston, SC
Colorado Springs, CO
Schenectady, NY
Missouri-Iowa, St. Louis, MO
- Elementary mathematics
Phoenix, AZ
Peoria, IL
Blacksburg, VA
- Secondary science
New York, NY
- Elementary science/mathematics
Hudson, MA

PIs and lead evaluators attended the new project orientation meeting in March and are now in the process of collecting baseline data and preparing to begin professional development this summer or fall.

For more information about all LSC projects and their personnel, you may go to the TEECH-LSC website maintained by TERC, Inc. at:

<http://teech-lsc.terc.edu>

There you will find web pages for individual projects, as well as a "Who's Who?" directory of people involved with all 81 LSC projects.

New Web Site Structure

<http://www.horizon-research.com/LSC/>

The HRI website for LSC 1999–2000 data collection underwent a major revision earlier this year. Among the featured sections you may find useful:

New Sections

Principal Investigators

Here, PIs may view their data collection schedules for the current year (with links to relevant documents) to keep abreast of the project's core evaluation requirements, as well as summaries of data submitted for their project via the web. PIs must access this section using the PI-specific username and password. (Click on "Log-in Help" for assistance.)

Data Collection Manual

The entire LSC 1999–2000 Core Evaluation Data Collection Manual (orange version in hard copy) is online in PDF format (requires Acrobat Reader). This section now contains all LSC protocols and questionnaires. The new data collection manual will be posted on the web at the beginning of the 2000–2001 data collection year.

Revised Sections

Lead Evaluators

This section has undergone a major facelift. As before, lead evaluators may view summaries of data submitted for their project via the web. Before any observation protocols are submitted via the web, **lead evaluators should go to this section to update their list of certified observers** for both classroom observations and professional development observations. The lead evaluator must access this section using the project evaluator-specific username and password assigned to the project. For those of you who have forgotten or misplaced these pieces of information, click on "Log-in Help" for assistance. This section also includes the project's data collection schedule for the current year, with links to relevant documents.

News, Reports, Presentations

This section contains the most recent LSC Core Update newsletter, as well as an archive of past newsletters. It also contains frequently requested documents such as the LSC Cross-Site Reports and ordering information for commercially available videos used in observation training.

The **Online Forms** section requires the current general LSC username (*****) and password (*****) in order to access protocols for data submission. In addition, your web browser must be JavaScript enabled for successful use of LSC online forms.

Each time you visit the web page, note the "What's New" sidebar highlighted in yellow on the left-hand margin. Postings of upcoming deadlines and events will be featured here, along with links to pertinent documents.

Dates to Remember

July 1, 2000

- Reporting Guidelines Available



July 31, 2000

- HRI Sends Out Data Tables

August 31, 2000

- End of Data Collection Year

October 16, 2000

- Interview/Observation Protocols and Core Evaluation Reports Due
- Projects Select Data Collection Schedule and Complete Project Description Form
- Sampling Frames Due

January 8–9, 2001

- Lead Evaluator Meeting Chapel Hill

February 8–9, 2001

- Classroom Observation Training

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 March–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 collected in a timely fashion and reported to HRI

Year Four Cross-Site Report

The “Local Systemic Change through Teacher Enhancement: Year Four Cross-Site Report” and “Executive Summary” are available on the Web at:

www.horizon-research.com/LSC/

Hard copies may also be obtained by

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(This newsletter is available on the Web.)