

LSC Core Update

CORE EVALUATION UPDATE

New

Newsletter

Welcome to the new *LSC Core Update*. Horizon Research, Inc. (HRI) developed this newsletter to provide Local Systemic Change projects with up-to-date information on the core evaluation in a readable and usable format. Initially, we plan to publish this newsletter bi-monthly.

HRI hopes this newsletter will help the Local Systemic Change projects across the country better understand the details of the core evaluation system and implement them effectively.

We want this newsletter to be as useful as possible and we welcome suggestions for future issues. Please feel free to contact HRI with your comments. Additional copies of this newsletter are available from HRI, and individuals will be added to the newsletter mailing list upon request.

FYI

Conference Notes

In early October, HRI hosted a Core Evaluation Conference in North Carolina for nearly 100 LSC project representatives. We hope everyone came away with a greater understanding of the core evaluation. A number of participants commented on the richness of discussions and noted that the conference helped provide a better perspective on the complexities of the core evaluation.

HRI had some specific goals for this meeting, which were addressed in a variety of ways:

⇒ **To help everyone understand the purpose of the core evaluation—meeting NSF's need for standardized data across all LSC projects around the country**

After describing the history of the LSC solicitation, NSF's Joyce Evans explained that the core evaluation came about to provide Congress with information about the quality of LSC projects, because Congress holds Teacher Enhancement accountable for funded programs. The point was made that this is NSF's evaluation and HRI is developing it under contract. As future funding decisions for LSC projects will hinge upon the success of the core evaluation, Evans emphasized the importance of full participation and cooperation as the core evaluation system develops.

⇒ **To update everyone on the current status of the system and get input on refinements to the data collection instruments**

HRI president Iris Weiss explained the current core requirements as well as changes NSF is considering to the core evaluation system. New LSC PIs and evaluators attended an orientation session to help them get up to speed on the core evaluation. Throughout the conference, HRI emphasized that the system is still under development and parts of it are in need of further refinement. Participants were encouraged to share their ideas and expertise, particularly with regard to improving the data collection instruments. For example, one group provided suggestions for improving the "equity" section on the observation protocols; another group helped think through shortening the teacher questionnaire.

⇒ **To work on forming a shared vision of exemplary science and mathematics instruction and provide training in using the classroom observation protocol**

Participants used the classroom observation protocol to rate several brief video clips and participated in large and small group discussions about these ratings. Small group discussions were very spirited, as participants wrestled with their individual concepts of exemplary science and mathematics instruction.

⇒ **To help evaluators think about integrating the core evaluation activities with their project evaluations**

Some Cohort 1 evaluators, with two years of core evaluation data collection experience, shared hints for using these data for formative purposes and for expanding on required core evaluation activities to get valuable project-specific data.

⇒ **To explain reporting requirements for evaluation reports and how these data are used by HRI in the Cross-Site Report**

HRI Senior Research Associate Diana Montgomery explained the 1995-96 reporting guidelines and how these reports relate to the Cross-Site Report prepared by HRI for NSF. Data tables with the 1996 questionnaire results were provided for each LSC project.

HRI would like to thank everyone for making this meeting a success. The conference provided us with insight into the needs of the LSC projects and how these relate to the core evaluation. This helped us understand more clearly which parts of the core evaluation are working and

where we need to focus our attention in the future.

SOMETHING NEW

Extending the Core

Discussions at the LSC Core Evaluation Conference in North Carolina, where considerable interest was shown in assessing the extent of school-level reform, led NSF to approve the use of HRI core evaluation funds for:

1. **Piloting activities** that may later become part of the core. For example, we will need teachers to provide assessment artifacts according to specific guidelines. As was the case last year, HRI will describe a task to be piloted, including both project responsibilities and incentives for participation, and request volunteers.
2. **Conducting additional observations** beyond the random sample of 10 treated teachers per subject. For example, a project may apply to observe 10 untreated as well as 10 treated teachers, or a larger number of treated teachers. We anticipate being able to provide each of 8–10 projects up to a maximum of \$2,000 to help support these additional observations; application deadline is January 15, 1997.
3. **Administering questionnaires** beyond the core random sample. HRI will provide questionnaires for lead teachers if projects complete an application form by December 2. Projects may also apply to receive questionnaires for other teachers not included in the random sample, but funds for this purpose are quite limited.

4. **Collaborative case studies** NSF would like to experiment with having a set of projects document how the LSC is playing out at the school level over time. Current NSF thinking is that each participating project would get about \$3,000 per year to conduct longitudinal mini-case studies in two schools.

Rather than having NSF/HRI specify the research protocols in advance, interested projects would be asked to collaborate on the study design, perhaps trying out several different data

Annual LSC Core Evaluation Requirements

- Professional Development Observations (5-8 per year)
- Teacher Questionnaires (300 if one subject; 450 if two subjects)
- Principal Questionnaires (population)
- Classroom Observations (10 per subject)
- Individual Teacher Interviews (10; not conducted baseline data collection year)

All data collection activities conducted March-May annually, except professional development observations which can be conducted throughout the year.

Project evaluators are responsible for reporting these data to HRI each fall for inclusion in the annual Cross-Site Report prepared by HRI.

CORE EVALUATION Q&A

collection strategies before the group decides on a common approach. This idea will be explored further at the January PI meeting.

Please note that NSF has specified that only projects that are successfully accomplishing data collection activities for the core evaluation are eligible for extending the core activities.

Questionnaire Sample Sizes

Send us your questions about the LSC core evaluation system. Any questions of general interest to the LSC community will be answered in this newsletter (of course, we will continue answering individual questions as needed).

Q - For questionnaires, why not sample a proportional number of teachers from each project?

A If the questionnaires were being
FEATURE

all program evaluation, HRI would draw a random sample from across all projects. Since the LSC core evaluation is designed to produce project-by-project results (rather than results for the program as a whole), it is necessary to have a large enough sample for each project to produce reliable results.

The situation is akin to public opinion polls. A national poll of a few hundred people is fine, but if you want to look at state-by-state results, you need a few hundred in each state.

Q Can I look at district and/or school results from the LSC questionnaire data?

A Several projects have asked us about disaggregating the questionnaire data from the core evaluation sample. HRI provides each project with all of the data from the random sample (on request we will provide evaluators with the link between teacher IDs and the questionnaire IDs in the data file).

The sample is designed to allow accurate estimates for the projects as a whole and would support one level of disaggregation close to a 50–50 split, e.g., comparing results for teachers in grades K–2 with those in grades 3–5.

Beyond that, sample sizes get too small, and sampling errors too large for confidence in interpretations. Evaluators are encouraged to disaggregate to look for patterns, but it is usually inappropriate to report results for very small samples.

If a project is interested in looking at the classroom practices for each of the several districts participating in the project, it will need to augment the core evaluation sample by administering additional questionnaires—either by making copies of the questionnaires and processing the data on-site, or by pursuing an “Extending the Core” activity.

Note that a very small project that surveys all its participating teachers

for the core evaluation can disagree to its heart’s content if the response rate is adequate, because there is no sampling error involved.

Targeted Teacher File

Each issue of this newsletter will include a discussion of a particular issue or part of the core evaluation system.

HRI uses the Targeted Teacher File (TTF) for drawing the core evaluation random samples each spring. Samples are drawn for teacher questionnaires, classroom observations, and teacher interviews, so it’s important that the file include only individuals appropriate for these activities. To make sure samples are accurate, projects must update the file each year.

The TTF Guidelines have changed somewhat for 1997. The most important modification is a clearer definition of “targeted teacher.” The file should still contain the names of all teachers the project plans to work with over the entire course of LSC funding (not just those who have already received treatment or who are currently participating).

The change from last year is that only those responsible for teaching the targeted subject(s) *this spring* should be included in the file (omit pre-K, librarians, media specialists, etc.). In team-teaching situations, include in the TTF only those individuals responsible for teaching the targeted subject(s) in spring 1997.

In addition, the TTF should include the “treatment” status of each individual teacher. For the purposes of selecting teachers for observations and interviews next spring, teachers are to be considered “treated” if they have participated in 20 hours or more of the LSC project’s professional development activities by December 31, 1996. (For projects collecting baseline data in 1997, “untreated” teachers will be selected for observation, and teachers will not be interviewed as part of the core evaluation).

How To Reach Us

Horizon Research, Inc.
 111 Cloister Court—Suite 220
 Chapel Hill, NC 27514
Phone: 919-489-1725
Fax: 919-493-7589
E-mail:
 horizon@nando.net

Projects using a "lead teacher" model should now include in the TTF an indicator for their lead teachers (this was an option last year).

Another modification to the TTF Guidelines applies to projects that put together a targeted teacher file last year (spring 1996). These projects have the option of either:

- A. Starting from scratch with the 1997 TTF Guidelines or
- B. Taking last year's file, deleting entries for individuals no longer appropriate for the file (due to teacher attrition, change in teaching assignment, the new definition of "targeted teacher," etc.), and adding entries for new teachers onto the end of the file. Treated and lead teacher status also need to be added for each individual teacher.

With Option B, the teacher ID numbers would remain the same as those included in last year's TTF. Hopefully, this option will save projects some time in compiling the file.

If enough projects choose Option B, it will be possible for HRI to do a program-wide "cohort analysis" in a few years, to determine the extent to which teachers implement and sustain reforms over time, using data from teachers who fall into the random sample in multiple years.

Before compiling or modifying the TTF, projects should obtain the detailed guidelines for the 1997 Targeted Teacher File (including Options A and B described above) which are now available from HRI.

A copy of these guidelines will be included in the 1997 Core Evaluation manual to be shipped to all LSC projects in January. Anyone who would like a copy of these guidelines earlier should contact HRI.

Sharing Ideas

As we have seen at LSC meetings, all the projects benefit from sharing ideas and resources. We invite you to write briefly (350 words or less) about any evaluation-related activities that you would like to share. We particularly encourage evaluators to share project-specific evaluation activities and ideas for integrating core activities with project evaluations. We will include in this newsletter any items that might be of interest to the LSC community.

Video References

Videotapes of science and mathematics classrooms and professional development sessions hold a good deal of potential for stimulating discussions about effective instruction, as well as for training observers in using the core evaluation observation protocols. Individuals interested in obtaining copies of the videotapes shown at the October meeting in North Carolina should contact the following sources:

Available from:

Annenberg/CPB Math & Science
P.O. Box 2345
South Burlington, VT 05407
1-800-965-7373

Teaching Math: A Video Library K-4

© WGBH Educational Foundation
Science Images © North Central
Regional Laboratory

Available from:

National Center for Research in
Teacher Learning
116 Erickson Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824
517-355-9302

Changing Practice: Teaching Mathematics for Understanding

LSC PROJECT FORUM

RESOURCES



Dates to Remember

- 11/15/96:** Each LSC evaluator should send the 1995-96 Core Evaluation Report to their project's PI for review (Cohorts 1 and 2 only)
- 11/30/96:** Each LSC evaluator should send the 1995-96 Core Evaluation Report and data sets to HRI
- 12/02/96:** Applications for administering additional questionnaires due at HRI
- 01/10/97:** 1997 LSC Core Evaluation Data Collection Manuals sent to projects
- 01/15/97:** Applications for additional observations due at HRI
- 01/23–** LSC PI Meeting in
01/25/97: Washington, DC

HRI REQUESTS & REMINDERS

Please Note

Interested PIs should request an application from HRI for conducting additional observations or administering lead teacher questionnaires (see "Extending the Core" on p. 2). Completed applications for questionnaires are due at HRI by December 2; applications for additional observations are due by January 15, 1997.

The classroom and professional development observation protocols have been revised based on feedback from PIs and evaluators, with fairly substantial changes to the equity section and the capsule descriptions. Let us know if you are interested in reviewing and

providing feedback on the new forms and we'll send you a set now (forms will be finalized in mid-December for inclusion in the 1997 LSC Manual).

HRI is continuing the search for classroom and professional development videos to use for observation training purposes. Please let us know about sources of videotapes that could be used for training (i.e. with permission granted to duplicate and distribute to the LSC community), especially "exemplary" science and mathematics instruction and professional development (in the 4–5 range on the LSC rating scale).

Horizon Research, Inc.

Suite 220
111 Cloister Court
Chapel Hill, NC 27514-2296