

LSC Core Update

1998-99 DATA COLLECTION

Sampling Frames Due Soon

LSC core evaluation spring data collection is based on random samples of teachers in each project. Project PIs are responsible for sending to HRI a list of all targeted teachers well in advance of data collection activities. From this sampling frame, we will draw samples for classroom observations, teacher interviews, and teacher questionnaires. To make sure the samples are accurate, projects need to update the file each year prior to spring data collection.

It is important that the file contain **all teachers with whom you plan to work** at any time during the LSC funding period, **whether or not they have yet participated in LSC professional development**. Include all such teachers who could be observed teaching the subject(s) of focus for your particular project during Spring 1999 data collection. Special education teachers who teach mathematics and/or science should be included if they are funded to receive NSF's required number of hours of LSC professional development (omit pre-K, librarians, media specialists, teachers on leave, etc.). In team-teaching situations, **include only those individuals responsible for teaching the targeted subject(s) in Spring 1999**.

Projects that put together a Sampling Frame last year (Spring 1998) are asked to update that file rather than compiling a completely new one. (In the event that this is not feasible, please contact HRI.)

To update the file:

A. Delete ineligible teachers (those on leave or no longer employed by the district, and those not responsible for teaching the targeted subjects/grades this spring). *Do not* change teacher

numbers for individuals remaining in the file.

B. Add new teachers at the end of the file (rather than inserting them alphabetically in each school). Assign these new teachers sequential numbers at the end of the file.

This process of updating last year's file should be easier than starting a new list for most projects, and keeping teacher numbers the same will allow HRI to conduct important program-wide research about reform implementation over time.

Detailed instructions (and directions for new projects compiling a sampling frame file for the first time) will be distributed within the next few weeks. HRI requests the sampling frame one month before questionnaires and labels are needed by the project (i.e., February 1 for March 1 distribution of questionnaires).

Project Information Requested

HRI has compared information from project data sheets submitted early on in a project's funding life with sampling frame data from 1997-98, and we are sorting out differences. For weighting purposes and to insure an accurate questionnaire order, projects are asked to inform HRI of any change in the number of targeted schools and any substantial change in the number of teachers. We need this information well in advance of the sampling frame as questionnaires are ordered in December.

To report a change in number of schools or teachers who will be participating over the duration of the project, please contact us at: lsc@horizon-research.com.

We are in the process of creating a "Description of Project Strategies" form that can be used with quantitative and qualitative analyses of results. We will likely send this new form to PIs after the first of the year and ask them to bring it with them to the PI meeting in January.

Questionnaire Cover Letter: Make Sure Participants Recognize "LSC"

In both the teacher and principal questionnaires, respondents are asked about their level of involvement in the LSC. A number of projects are finding that responses to these questions are inconsistent with participation records and project experience. It appears that the terminology is throwing people off; respondents may not realize that a given project, known by whatever acronym, is in fact, an LSC. Given that questionnaires are printed in bulk, the project-specific name does **not** appear in the questionnaires. **Therefore, letters accompanying both teacher and principal questionnaires must be very clear about the program referred to as the "LSC."**

Even though questionnaire administration is several months away, projects may wish to begin composing the cover letter which will accompany the questionnaires. It should include:

- The name and/or acronym of the project with a clear explanation that this is the project referred to as the "LSC" in the questionnaire;
- Specific instructions determined by the project for returning the questionnaire;
- A request for the respondent to remove the ID Label prior to returning the questionnaire;
- A specific response deadline (we suggest two weeks after the initial distribution date); and
- A thank you to the respondent for participating in this questionnaire.

In the 1997-98 Data Collection Manual (Tabs 4 and 5), HRI has included sample letters that may help projects get started in drafting their own.

The letter accompanying the Principal Questionnaire should also include a brief explanation of the LSC core evaluation and the purpose of the questionnaire; as well as an assurance of the confidentiality of responses.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Send us your questions about the LSC core evaluation system. Questions of general interest to the LSC community will be answered in this newsletter.

Q: On last year's Classroom Observation Protocol, observers were asked if the instructional materials in use during the observation were among those designated for use by the LSC. How do we know what the designated materials are? And, should we observe only those lessons taught using these particular materials?

A: Under "Instructional Materials," Section One, IV. B., we are referring to materials designated in the project's proposal to NSF or negotiated as part of the award process. A partial list of materials is included on the form, but it is by no means exhaustive.

Observers will need to be familiar with the specific instructional materials designated in your project's plan. If the lesson is from one of the designated curricula, the observer will need to be familiar with the particular lesson in order to determine whether the teacher adhered to the instructions provided (Item D). In cases where you are not familiar with the particular planned lesson, you might want to ask the teacher if you can see the lesson materials beforehand.

Please do not bias the sample, either by suggesting teachers use the LSC-designated materials when you observe or by choosing backups if teachers were not using those materials. The point is to get a snapshot of science/mathematics instruction across the project.

Q: What do we need to do when new schools or districts are added to our project?

A: From time to time, projects find that they will be serving schools or districts not originally targeted by the LSC. HRI needs to know how many districts, schools and teachers are participating in each project in order to draw the samples, get you the appropriate number of forms, and weight the results. In terms of the sampling frame,

teachers from new districts/schools should be added at the bottom of the list of teachers, just as one would add new teachers (see page 1). Assign the next consecutive district and then school number without rearranging the list or reassigning teacher numbers. In the rare case where a district or school drops out, delete the school name and number and *do not* reassign those numbers.

WEB UPDATE

98-99 PDOPs Now Available on the Web

The 1998-99 Professional Development Observation Protocol is now available for submission via the Web. Go to: <http://www.horizon-research.com/LSC> and choose "LSC Online Forms." Same Username: *****
New password: *****

There are a few changes to this year's PDOP submission procedure:

1. The form requires a browser which supports JavaScript. (Versions 3.0 or greater of Netscape Navigator or Internet Explorer are recommended.) If your browser doesn't support JavaScript, you'll be taken to a page which tells you where you can obtain a newer browser.
2. You no longer need to complete the PDOP in one sitting. As with last year's Classroom Observation and Teacher Interview forms, you can submit a partially completed form and return to it later to edit or finish the form. To submit an incomplete form, just click on "Submit Partial Form" rather than "Submit Complete Form" at the bottom of the form.
3. Lead Evaluators can save their project's data as a plain-text file, which can be converted into a spreadsheet. Lead Evaluators should use the same project-specific password which was sent to them last year to access their project's data.

If you have questions about using the LSC Online Forms, please contact Scott Hanrath at: webmaster@horizon-research.com.

Scannable versions of the PDOP are available by request from HRI for obser-

vations completed prior to December 31, 1998. Beginning January 1, 1999, all PDOPs must be submitted via the Web.

FYI

Welcome to New LSC Projects

Thirteen projects were funded in 1997-98, bringing the total to 59 for Core Evaluation Year Four. The first secondary science project, in Spokane, WA received funding during this time period. Another secondary science project has now been funded as the first project in Cohort 5, and NSF is in the process of negotiating a number of new awards. Check the TEECH site for information on project PIs and other contacts.

Some LSC Projects Drawing to a Close

Four LSC projects completed their final year of data collection in 1997-98, and another 9 will complete their efforts during the current year. Final-year projects will conduct the usual data collection activities, and in addition will be asked to complete a district information sheet describing the current status of district policies and practices.

Year Three Cross-Site Report Goes to Press

As 1997-98 Core Evaluation Reports came in, HRI staff were busy finalizing the Year Three Cross-Site Report. Once it has been reviewed by NSF, copies of the Highlights report will be sent to each project, with the entire Technical Report available upon request.

Great strides were made this year in systemizing data collection and analysis which should expedite the writing of the Year Four report. Core evaluation reports have, for the most part, been arriving in a timely fashion, consistent with the streamlining of the process and well ahead of last year's schedule. Most evaluators followed the reporting guidelines to organize their reports, greatly facilitating the process of reading and analysis by HRI staff.



Classroom Observation Training at Regional Evaluator Meetings

Plans have crystallized for the 1999 lead evaluator meetings to be held in February in the weeks following the January 21–23 PI meeting in Washington, DC. HRI will work with PIs at the January meeting to get their input into the core evaluation, especially regarding assessment of the quality of LSC professional development. Since lead evaluators will generally not be attending the PI meeting in January, a number of PIs in attendance will be invited to regional meetings to share the PI perspective from this earlier meeting.

There will be three regional meetings for lead evaluators in February:

February 8–10 Philadelphia
February 17–19 San Francisco
February 24–26 Chicago

(The meeting originally planned for Seattle has been canceled because a number of Seattle area projects have lead evaluators from other regions.)

The regional meetings will consist of two components:

Part 1 will provide a repeat of classroom observation training for projects who wish to have additional observers trained. These individuals should plan to attend the first day and a half of their regional meeting. On the morning of the second day, HRI will administer an interrater task for those newly trained observers and an optional refresher session for evaluators and already certified observers who wish to view additional classroom videos.

Part 2 of the regional meetings will begin at noon on the second day and will focus on professional development. NSF has asked us to remind you that lead evaluators are now required to personally observe a minimum of three professional development sessions.

The "certification" process for evaluating the quality of professional development will be somewhat different from that used for the classroom observations. The regional training sessions will focus on assessing the quality of the entire pro-

fessional development program of the LSC, as well as the quality of individual sessions. Participation at a regional meeting is required for lead evaluators to be considered certified for professional development observations/program evaluation, but there will not be any formal tests of "interrater reliability."

Projects that have professional development observers in addition to the lead evaluator have two options for training additional observers. These observers are welcome to attend the regional meetings, or the lead evaluator can oversee the training locally. (HRI will provide the lead evaluator with a set of videos, rating forms, and "answer keys" to use in training these other observers.) Either attendance at the meeting or the lead evaluator's indication that an observer has gone through the training successfully will count as "certification" for professional development observing.

If you have not already done so, please let us know the names of the people from your project who will be attending each part of each regional meeting:

Part 1 - Training for LSC Classroom Observations (First day and a half)

Part 2 - Assessing the Quality of Professional Development Programs and other core evaluation issues (Noon of second day through third day).

Opportunities to Supplement the Core

NSF has approved the use of core evaluation funds to provide opportunities for projects that wish to supplement the core evaluation data collection activities. In 1997–98, funds were provided for supplementing the core in three areas:

1. Administering teacher questionnaires beyond the core sample;
2. Additional classroom observations beyond the core sample; and
3. School documentation mini-grants.

Similar opportunities will be provided in 1998–99. Applications for all of these options have been e-mailed to PIs and are due at HRI by **December 11, 1998**. Below is a description of the three supplemental activities to be funded in 1998–99.

Extra Teacher Questionnaires

HRI will provide questionnaires and scanning as part of supplementing the core evaluations, but projects will be responsible for creating questionnaire labels if needed, analyzing the data, and preparing result tables. Data tables that HRI sends out for 1999 teacher questionnaires will **not** include these "extra" questionnaires. As was the case in 1997–98, HRI anticipates being able to provide extra questionnaires to all projects that request them by the December 11 deadline. No supplementary report is required.

Extra Classroom Observations

From 8 to 10 projects will be awarded mini-grants up to a maximum of \$2,000 to help support classroom observations beyond the random sample of 10 per subject required by the core evaluation. Applications should be submitted by the PI, and the PI is responsible for ensuring that the work is completed as planned. Notification of awards will be made by January 29, 1999. Projects proposing to observe a special group of teachers (e.g., longitudinal or lead) will be required to submit a separate write-up outlining what the project learned from those observations. For projects conducting additional random observations, HRI will draw a sample in addition to the required ten. In such cases, the data should be reported in the core evaluation write-up.

School Documentation

Up to eight projects will be awarded mini-grants of up to \$3,000 per year to document reform at the school level. Projects are asked to document the reform process in two or more schools of particular interest to the project. The purpose is to understand and document the reform process over time in a variety of school contexts, not to evaluate the impact of a particular LSC project. Given that these mini-grants are for documentation rather than evaluation, the work can be carried out by the PI, lead teachers, evaluators, or other project staff. (See the LSC TEECH site at <http://teech-lsc.terc.edu/> for reports from previously funded school documentation sites.) Interested PIs should send a school documentation proposal to HRI, including a brief description of the purposes of the study, the questions and data collection strategies to be used, the number of schools to be studied, and



Dates to Remember

1998

- 11/20** Registration Deadline for Regional Evaluator Meetings
- 12/11** "Extending the Core" Deadline
- 12/18** Registration Deadline for PI Meeting

1999

- 1/21–23** Pre-Session for PIs and HRI, PI Meeting, Washington, DC
- 2/8–10** Regional Evaluator Meeting, Philadelphia
- 2/17–19** Regional Evaluator Meeting, San Francisco
- 2/24–26** Regional Evaluator Meeting, Chicago
- 3/1–5/31** 1999 LSC Core Evaluation Spring Data Collection

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New LSC Contact at HRI

Claudia Templeton will be taking a leave of absence for the spring semester. Already on board and busy reading 1997–98 Core Evaluation Reports is Gail Gellatly, who will take over daily communication with projects in Claudia's absence. Gail comes to us from the National Paideia Center at UNC-Chapel Hill, and has been here since August, learning about the LSC from Claudia and other HRI staff. The e-mail address remains the same (lsc@horizon-research.com), but if you are calling after January 1, ask for Gail.

How To Reach Us

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(This newsletter is available on the Web.)

Annual LSC Core Evaluation Requirements

- Professional Development Observations (5–8 per year)
- Teacher Questionnaires (300 per subject)
- Principal Questionnaires (population)
- Classroom Observations (Minimum of 10 per subject)
- Individual Teacher Interviews (10; not conducted baseline data collection year)
- PI/Project Team Interviews

Most data collection activities are conducted March–May annually, except professional development observations and the PI/Project Team Interviews, which may be conducted throughout the data collection year (September 1 through August 31).

The PI is responsible for making sure that core evaluation data are collected in a timely fashion and reported to HRI each fall for inclusion in the annual Cross-Site Report prepared by HRI.