

## *Chapter Nine*

### **Sustainability of Reform**

The LSC awards are intended to provide support for professional development during the grant period and to develop strategies to ensure that the districts will continue to support reform after the funded period. As a prelude to rating participating LSC districts on the sustainability of mathematics and science reform, evaluators were asked to review their notes of interviews with PIs and district personnel, project documents (e.g., proposals and annual progress reports), observations of professional development activities and district meetings, and district documents (e.g., policy manuals and budget reports). Based on these data, evaluators were asked to reflect on the extent to which the LSC has enhanced both the capacity and the will of the districts to provide high-quality mathematics and science professional development.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Elements of Sustainability**

Evaluators' attention to the area of sustainability was rather limited, as might be expected given that most of the projects were in their initial phases. However, based on evaluation reports, there was evidence that some projects included elements that might contribute toward maintaining high-quality professional development programs.

##### ***Developing a Cadre of Teacher Leaders***

Evaluators reported that most LSC districts are working to build the capacity of teacher leaders and are involving these teachers in facilitating professional development activities. The hope is that the district will continue to support these teachers to work in a leadership capacity after the LSC project. Evaluators noted, however, that in many cases districts appear to be dependent on the LSC grant for planning and delivering high-quality professional development, and there is no system in place for ongoing leadership development after the LSC grant period.

##### ***Providing Incentives for Professional Development***

Evaluators reported that quite a few of the LSC districts are changing their policies to increase teacher participation in high-quality professional development.

*[A number of] districts have negotiated 20 extra hours of staff development each year for their teachers. The [LSC] project has made districts aware that there is insufficient time for teachers to meet and reflect on their practice, conditions necessary for sustained change. These negotiated days represent a significant change and it is anticipated as other districts negotiate new contracts, they will also increase the required time for teacher professional development.*

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<sup>1</sup> In projects involving multiple districts, evaluators were asked to provide separate ratings for a sample of three districts that were broadly representative of the participating districts.

*...a professional development plan for beginning teachers that requires 150 hours of professional development is in place. The 150 hours of professional development is being redone and there will be a heavy emphasis on content requirements for elementary school teachers. The current [LSC] summer institute for new and beginning teachers is a component of this content requirement and will continue when the [LSC] grant ends.*

### ***Encouraging Districts to Increase their Investments in Mathematics and science Education***

Evaluators described several mechanisms to enhance district support of mathematics and science education. Examples include:

- **Providing a framework for the use of existing funds**

*The introduction of the [LSC] project actually gave a platform to move more money into the area of math and science. Technology funds (over \$300,000) and Goals 2000 funds were moved into the area of professional development. It gave an initial framework for funds that were available.*

- **Strategic placement of teachers on district committees**

*The LSC program is now placing emphasis on increasing willingness of the districts to provide resources for ongoing, high-quality science professional development programs through developing a better informed collection of principals and positioning of enthusiastic and confident, knowledgeable teachers on key district, school, and department committees.*

- **Obtaining district commitment to continue funding resource centers to provide professional development materials or both**

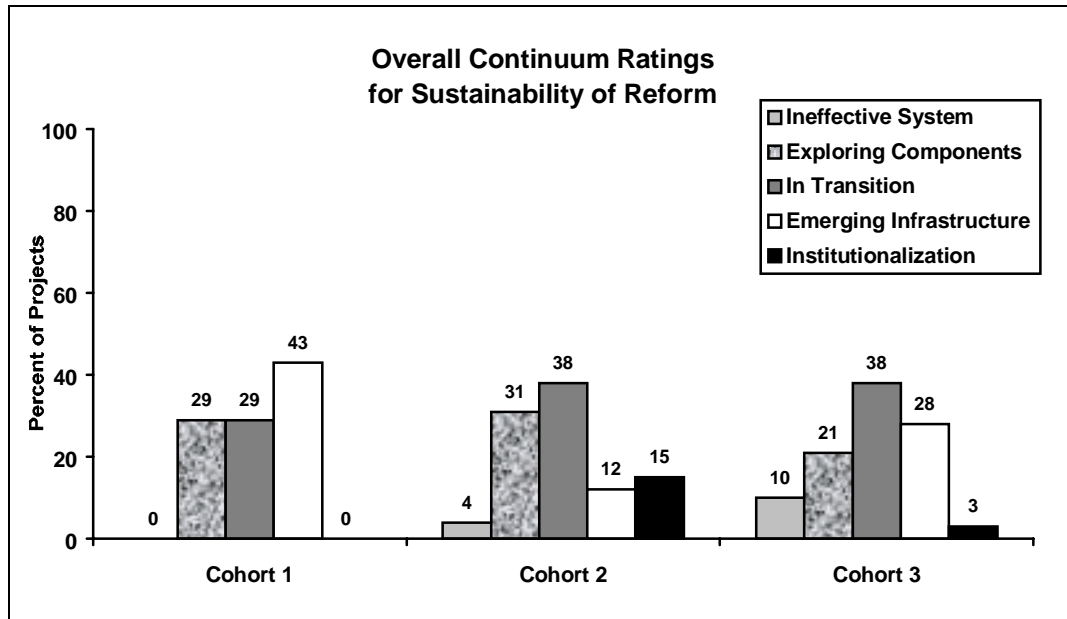
*The [science education center] and the district's financial commitment to keep the center operating once the LSC funding period has ended, is an important "mechanism" that can continue to offer ongoing PD opportunities to teachers interested in improving their practice.*

## **Overall Ratings of Sustainability**

In addition to noting specific ways in which the districts were, and were not, creating mechanisms to sustain the LSC reform process, evaluators assigned each district a "sustainability rating" on a five-point continuum from 1, "predominately ineffective system" to 5, "institutionalization" of a high-quality professional development system.

Figure 39 summarizes district continuum ratings of sustainability by cohort. Continuum ratings across cohorts once again suggest some trend toward increased sustainability as projects (and district involvement) mature; however, this pattern is less striking for sustainability than it was for supportiveness. The modal rating for Cohort 1 districts indicates that many of them are at the "emerging infrastructure" stage. The modal rating for newer (Cohort 2 and 3) districts is "in transition." Given the time needed for districts to institutionalize reform, this repeated pattern

suggests that some Cohort 2 and Cohort 3 districts had taken some important initial steps toward aligning policy and practice and institutionalizing high-quality professional development before receiving their LSC awards.



*Figure 39*

## Summary

- ❑ While evaluator reports tended to be rather sketchy in the area of sustainability, they provided some evidence that LSC districts are beginning to grapple with sustaining the reforms begun during the grant period. Evaluators reported a number of ways in which districts are building upon the LSC efforts in order to institutionalize the reform process, including the convergence of resources in support of the LSC vision, the development of incentives for continued professional development, and plans to maintain the involvement of LSC teachers in key leadership positions in the districts.
- ❑ Evaluators report that in their third year of operation, Cohort 1 projects typically have “an emerging infrastructure” to sustain reform, while the newer projects are “in transition.” Clearly, institutionalization issues are key to the long-term impact of the LSC projects.

