

Conference Evaluation Summary

Adding Value to the Mathematics and Science Partnership Evaluations
Wisconsin Center for Education Research, University of Wisconsin
February 20-21, 2003

On February 20-21, 2003 at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, 23 participants met for the first bi-annual Adding Value to the Mathematics and Science Partnership (MSP) Evaluations Conference. Participants included 16 evaluators of the comprehensive and targeted MSPs, one principal investigator of the MSPs, and 6 RETA representatives including 3 from the Adding Value Evaluation Project.

The Conference covered important aspects of evaluation including identifying critical evaluation needs and designing evaluations. Participants were sent an National Institute for Science Education Brief on Value-Added Indicators in advance of the Conference. Following an introduction to each session were small group discussions where participants analyzed and responded to questions on measuring intervention, measuring student outcomes, and assessing causation. After the discussion groups met, the information was reported back to all of the participants. The notes from the discussion group sessions are available as the Summary of the Adding Value Conference. The discussion and networking opportunities aided the Conference in achieving its overall goal: to clarify evaluation needs through networking and intellectually rich conversations among MSP evaluators and Research, Evaluation, and Technical Assistance (RETA) projects.

Summary of Responses

What follows is a summary of the evaluations completed by the conference participants. The response rate was 75 percent, with 15 of the 20 participants completing evaluations (not all participants responded to all questions). Participants were asked to respond to how much they gained from each of the following aspects of the conference:

Part I: Measuring Intervention
Part II: Measuring Student Outcomes
Part III: Assessing Causation
Reading the Brief prior to the meeting
The small group discussions
Large group sharing of projects
Other opportunities for networking
The conference overall

Participants were asked to rate each of these items on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 signifying the lowest rating, "none," and 5 signifying the highest rating, "a great deal."

How much did you gain from Part I: Measuring Intervention?

The average rating for Part I was 3.7, with 92 percent giving Part I a rating of 3 or higher. A few participants wrote comments in addition to giving their rating. Positive responses made by participants about Part I include:

Good to be forced to get grounded at this level.

Hearing what other programs are doing, what skills are distributed among this group, were quite helpful.

Good for getting an overview of interventions being used in other MSPs.

The following is a suggestion for improvement of Part I:

Spent more time examining effects/intended effects of intervention than quality and nature of intervention itself – which I would have preferred.

How much did you gain from Part II: Measuring Student Outcomes?

The average rating for Part II was 3.6, with 86 percent giving Part II a rating of 3 or higher. The following comments were made regarding Part II:

Very useful to think about variety of outcomes and what aspects of intervention might lead to each.

Hearing what other programs are doing, what skills are distributed among this group, were quite helpful.

How much did you gain from Part III: Assessing Causation?

The average rating for Part III was 4.2, with 100 percent giving Part III a rating of 3 or higher. The following comments were made in response to Part III:

Best session, especially small group after.

Excellent discussion of design and ramifications/implications for project design and allocation of resources

Will be very important in how evaluation plans in MSP are analyzed.

How much did you gain from reading the Brief prior to the conference?

The average rating on reading the Brief prior to the conference was 2.9, with 66 percent giving a rating of 3 or higher. Three of the participants said that they did not receive the Brief in advance.

How much did you gain from attending the small group discussions?

The average rating on attending the small group discussions was 4.6, with 100 percent giving a rating of 3 or higher.

How much did you gain from the large group sharing of projects?

The average rating on the large group sharing of was 4.0, with 100 percent giving a rating of 3 or higher.

How much did you gain from other opportunities for networking?

The average rating on opportunities for networking was 3.9, with 100 percent giving a rating of 3 or higher. Two participants did not provide a response to this question.

How much did you gain from the conference overall?

Below are participants' comments on what they gained from the conference overall:

A tremendous amount. The networking, idea sharing, and presentations were rich with ideas, possibilities, and connections. I will have much to bring back to my project and implement.

My eyes were opened a little wider to some issues I had not taken as seriously before such as the "value-added" perspective.

Great networking!

The conference was very valuable in putting different parts of evaluation together and in perspective to the MSP.

I found the conference to be one of the most valuable I've attended. A community of evaluators is a great idea. I look forward to continuing to meet.

What are the most important and relevant topics to be discussed at the next meeting on September 18 and 19, 2003?

Validity of documentation for diverse populations.

Analytical tools and techniques.

Review the RFP; review and discuss specific MSP goals and objectives; discussion of outputs versus outcomes and how we can improve our projects; impact of projects on systemic change/reform.

Instruments people have found or developed; updates on evaluation plans, preferably with documentation from each project – given that several of us are still designing; particularly interested in what parts of design have had to be abandoned and why, what it has been possible to add and how; discuss mid-term analyses and reports, as programming and policy decisions are almost always made before evaluations are completed.

Work through MSPs case by case; instruments – especially on classroom observation and professional development.

Hold a causation session with both large group and breakout sessions. Measuring more proximal outcomes, such as teacher learning or translating professional development experiences to practice; evaluating other MSP activities such as program change (higher education or LEA), leadership development, recruitment/retention.

More on the design of longitudinal analyses, analysis tools, and linking professional development, instruction, and student outcomes.

Strategies for what to do when you don't have baseline data.

Reporting/communicating findings for formative and summative purposes to a variety of audiences; attending to equity/diversity issues of interventions and outcomes; attending to chain of evidence from intervention (or even back to design of intervention) to outcomes; and attending to system outcomes in addition to teaching and learning outcomes.

I am most interested in sharing instruments and measurement protocols. I think the case study approach would be valuable. However, any of the aspects discussed at the meeting would have value to our MSP.

Participants had several additional comments to add:

Much more helpful, practical, and rich than the NSF initial meeting (which had a different purpose).

Thank you. A wonderful jumpstart for MSP evaluation. Connection with an evaluation community. Very nice treatment (hotel, food). Thanks!

Very interesting discussions. I have several questions/issues to take back to project folks.

Very valuable conference and beautifully hosted. Thank you!

Thank you for building around networking opportunities.

Thanks for a very productive conference.

Excellent opportunity to learn, share, and strategize.

Summary

The first bi-annual Adding Value Conference provided a variety of opportunities for both formal and informal conversations to identify critical evaluation needs in the review of the Mathematics and Science Partnerships. A summary of the evaluation responses indicates that the participants valued the Conference and gained new information.