



**LSS User Satisfaction Surveys:
Professional Development Program Evaluations and Tracer Studies**

by
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Surveys of user satisfaction are conducted on a routine basis by the Laboratory for Student Success (LSS). The user satisfaction surveys serve as a needs assessment tool for program and product development and improvement and to provide a summative evaluation of the work of LSS. Specifically, the surveys are used to: (a) examine the level of satisfaction with the work of LSS; and (b) provide program/product specific assessments. The focus of this *Spotlight* is on two of the major LSS survey activities: professional development program evaluations and tracer studies.

As one component of its quality assurance program, LSS engages in a variety of documentation and evaluation activities to follow up on training and technical assistance activities. In terms of training, participants/clients are asked to rate each event on a routinely administered evaluation form. These data in turn provide insight as the quality of the work of LSS, the effectiveness of LSS staff, and the usefulness of LSS materials and products. Tracer studies are employed at a reasonable timeframe after training to better assess the impact and utility of the training provided. With the tracer studies, it is also possible to estimate the extent to which information has been disseminated beyond the actual attendees at the event.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAM EVALUATIONS**

At the conclusion of each LSS professional development program, participants are asked to complete an event evaluation form for the services and programs provided by LSS. These results provide insights into participants' perceptions of program content, presenters, and materials for each event. Figure 1 shows the mean ratings for the past year for all LSS events based on participants' responses. The ratings are

on a five-point scale, where 5 = the highest rating and 1 = the lowest.

These findings indicate that LSS clients find the professional development programs conducted by LSS to be of high quality, and demonstrate a high level of client satisfaction expressed for the work of LSS.

Participants reported that the information provided at LSS professional development programs was very useful (mean = 4.4) and they expressed interest in learning more about the topics pre-

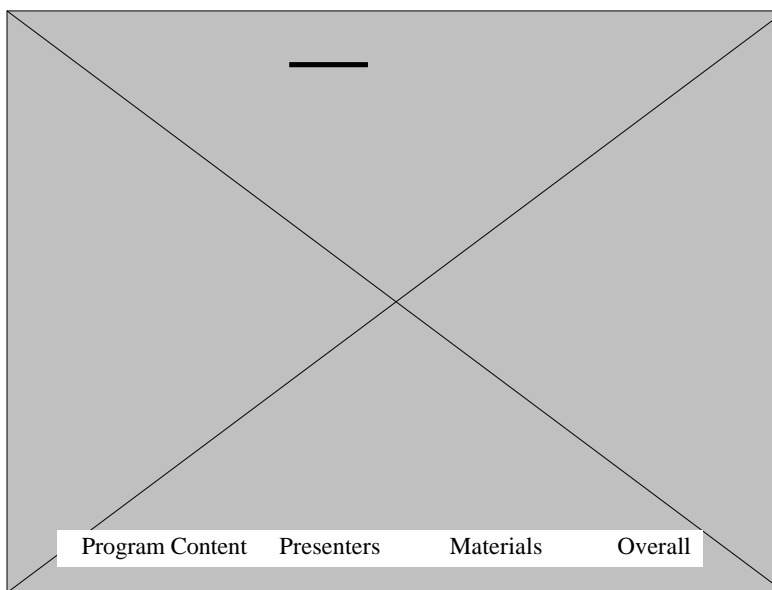


Figure 1
**Findings from Participant Evaluations of LSS
Professional Development Programs**

sented (mean =3.7). About 95% of the participants indicated that the information could be applied immediately to their jobs and could be incorporated into current school and district plans. On open-ended questions, most participants commented on the professional nature of LSS professional development programs. In general, these findings suggest that LSS events are well received, generate much enthusiasm among participants, and result in movement or action at the local district and school level.

TRACER STUDIES

Approximately four months after a professional development program is completed, tracer studies are conducted with a systematic, stratified random sample of participants, where approximately 50% of the attendees are contacted by telephone. The purpose of the tracer studies is to follow-up on the impact of the event after the participants

have had the chance to apply the concepts/content presented at the event in practical settings and situations. The intent of these surveys is to determine participants' ratings of the usefulness of the material from the professional development program, the degree to which the information has been incorporated into the participants' work, and the extent to which the information has been shared with other colleagues who did not attend the event.

The results from 1998 are summarized below in Table 1. These findings indicate that the information from the professional development program was rated as very useful (mean = 4.1) and has been incorporated into the work of the majority of event participants (mean = 3.1). These data provide further compelling evidence about the utility of the work of LSS. They suggest that LSS professional development activities have been highly successful and that partici-

pants are translating the information gained from these activities into practice.

The tracer studies also address the dissemination of information. Of the 239 participants surveyed, about 84% shared information with other colleagues not in attendance at the event. This sharing was done by primarily through presentations and by copying materials. The respondents indicated that their colleagues found the information shared with them to be useful (mean = 3.6). On average, the information from LSS professional development programs is shared with approximately 15 other colleagues; by extrapolation, it is estimated that the total dissemination of information and materials has reached more than 6,900 individuals from the 19 professional development programs surveyed. These results suggest the impact of LSS activities is much broader than mere attendance figures would suggest.

CONCLUSION

It is the responsibility of the educational community to seek knowledge on a continuing basis. LSS shares substantial information with educators and at the same time listens to the wealth of information provided by the educators through the surveys that are conducted. LSS surveys provide the educator with a voice to communicate concerns about educational practice, and this information in turn better enables LSS to provide timely and relevant assistance regarding educational improvement to states and local schools in the mid-Atlantic region. It is through this process that LSS translates research into practice and attempts to diminish the discrepancy between the state of the art and the state of practice.

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For further information on LSS publications or events, contact the LSS Information Services Coordinator at (800) 892-5550 or visit the LSS website at <<http://www.temple.edu/LSS>>.

**Table 1
Summary of Tracer Studies**

Number of Events Surveyed	19
Number of Participants Surveyed (50% Stratified, Random Sample)	239
Job Category of Participants	
Teacher/Instructional Specialist	78
Principal	66
Superintendent	30
Curriculum Specialist	20
Department of Education	17
Grants Specialist	12
Educational Researcher	11
Other	5
Results (scale: 1 = Lowest and 5 = Highest)	
How useful was the information?	4.1
Has the information been incorporated into your work?	3.1
Sharing of Information with Colleagues	
Percentage Sharing Information	84%
Number of People	3,492
Mean Number of People	14.6
Estimated Dissemination	6,948
Grants Specialist	12
Educational Researcher	11
Other	5