



**LSS Quality Assurance:
The Role of the Technical Review Board**

by
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At the Laboratory for Student Success (LSS), quality assurance is the collective responsibility of the Executive Director, the Executive Directorate, and the LSS senior research associates. The LSS quality assurance system is based on both formal and informal processes and is an essential component in the LSS scope of work. Quality assurance issues are addressed through ongoing procedures involving feedback from several sources, including the Governing Board of Directors, the Stakeholder Advisory Board, and the Technical Review Board; field-based collaborators; and LSS clients. Self-assessments are also performed by Laboratory staff. In this way, the work of LSS is constantly updated and refined.

The purpose of this *Spotlight* is to present an overview of the review process of LSS products and publications by members of the LSS Technical Review Board. The LSS Technical Review Board is comprised of researchers and practitioners whose fields of expertise include curriculum design, program evaluation, and research design and methodology. Board members

review documents related to their own areas of expertise and gauge the potential impact of the work for the target audience of researchers and policymakers in the mid-Atlantic region and throughout the nation. LSS places great weight on these reviews, which enhance the practical and policy implications of professional publications emerging from LSS's research and development projects. This *Spotlight* illustrates the crucial role of the Board in maintaining the high level of quality expected in publications produced by LSS researchers.

METHODOLOGY

The four papers focused on in this *Spotlight* chosen for evaluation by the Technical Review Board were written in 1998. Each paper relates to current LSS applied research and development projects. From the 14 members of the Technical Review Board, 8 members were identified as having appropriate and relevant expertise in the subject matter of these manuscripts. Each of the papers selected was sent to two Board members in order to gain insight from members'

different perspectives and to ensure inter-rater reliability. Those members chosen were asked to respond to a survey questionnaire, and to provide additional written comments on the quality and utility of LSS products and publications.

RESULTS

Technical Review Board members' responses to the survey questions are shown in Figure 1. Each response on the scale was assigned a point value ranging from "Excellent Quality" or "Extremely Useful" = 5 to "Poor Quality" or "Not at All Useful" = 1. The mean responses for each question were: Question 1—overall quality: 3.8; Question 2—breadth/comprehensiveness of research: 3.8; Question 3—timeliness: 4.1; Question 4—usefulness for researchers: 4.1; and Question 5—usefulness for practitioners: 2.6. In translating these mean values relative to their respective scales, the reviews indicated the following:

- overall quality of the publications was good;
- research was very comprehensive;