

Program Evaluation Planning and Design: A Guide for Teacher Centers

This overview of program evaluation design is intended to assist Teacher Centers in planning and conducting evaluation of their professional development activities. The overview will contain references to materials available on the programevaluation.org website.

Focusing the evaluation

Careful planning is essential to any program evaluation. While evaluations often do not unfold exactly as planned, it is essential to identify the purpose of the program, key elements that help the program to be successful, what success would look/sound like, and what it is that key audiences need and want to know. Understanding these issues provides focus to the evaluation. Focusing the evaluation helps the evaluator identify the most crucial questions and how those questions can be realistically answered given the context of the program and resources available. The Evaluation Planner (Appendix A) can help evaluators to develop an evaluation plan. There are many benefits to carefully planned evaluation:

- Thoughtful questions yield useful results.
- Assessments can be embedded in programs allowing for more depth of information.
- Responsibilities can be delegated to participants, trainers, and other stakeholders.
- Coordination of information collection procedures makes evaluation much more efficient.
- Planning prevents duplicated efforts. Existing information or data sources can be identified and used. For example, a school district may be already collecting information relevant to program outcomes.

Purpose of the evaluation

The first step in evaluation is to have a clear understanding of why the evaluation is being conducted in the first place. Is it to satisfy a grant requirement? Provide information to continually improve Center functioning? Decide what programs to

Topics in this Guide:

Focus the evaluation
Identify purpose(s) of the evaluation
Identifying audiences and stakeholders
Determine level of impact
Determining the 'stakes'
Formative versus summative evaluations
Understand the evaluation 'context'
Prioritize what to evaluate
Generate questions
Identify existing sources of information
Determine feasibility
Design the evaluation
Develop an evaluation calendar

Appendices

- A. Evaluation Planner
- B. Professional Dev. Outcomes
 - a. Planner
 - b. Survey
- C. Evaluation Calendar Example

continue and which ones to cut? Certainly, many evaluations have multiple purposes and audiences, but these have to be clearly identified and prioritized. Once the purpose of the evaluation is understood, the aspects of the program to be investigated and those who might see, use and or be affected by the evaluation results (audiences) become clearer.

As the purpose of the evaluation becomes clear, evaluators list ‘objects’ or ‘processes’ to be evaluated. For example an *object* to be evaluated might be inservices/courses provided by the Teacher Center, while a *process* might be how inservices/courses are selected and advertised. Since it is unlikely that all activities and processes would be evaluated, it is important to prioritize, however at first brainstorming all potential objects and processes to be evaluated may be helpful. Keeping the Teacher Center mission statement, purpose for the evaluation, stakes of outcomes and potential evaluation audience in mind will help to prioritize throughout the planning process.

Identifying audiences and stakeholders

Now that you have a list of Center programs and or activities that might be evaluated, consider who is affected by the program (stakeholders) and who might receive and or use information resulting from the evaluation (audiences). Below is a list of potential stakeholders and audiences for a Teacher Center Evaluation.

Stakeholders (Who is effected by the program)	Audience (sees and or uses evaluation information)
Students	Center Director/Policy Board
Parents	State Education Department
Teachers	Funders
Administrators	Administrators
Community members	Potential Advocates
	Inservice/course Instructors

It is important to identify audiences and stakeholders early on because they will shape what questions are asked, the rigor needed to support results, and the way in which results will be communicated.

Level of impact

Professional development can have an impact on participants in a number of ways including: building awareness, increasing knowledge and skills of participants, and promoting changes that result in positive student outcomes. Impact may be seen as a hierarchy beginning with the goal of increasing participant awareness and culminating at the top of the hierarchy with the objective of promoting positive student outcomes:

- Increased participant knowledge/awareness of issues related to the training
- Participant understanding of the relevance that the staff development can have for potential impact on their professional practice
- Impact on participant's behavior, methods, materials used in the classroom
- Positive impact on student/classroom outcomes

Training objectives should be clear from the onset of any substantial staff development effort. While it may be appropriate for some staff development efforts to raise awareness, increase knowledge or inspire educators, a comprehensive staff development plan will include trainings that result in long term positive impact for a wide range of educators and students. A program whose sole intent is on building participant awareness would yield weak outcome data if student impact were assessed. Likewise, an evaluation consisting only of participant satisfaction ratings would sell a program short if the program were successful at producing measurable student outcomes. Understanding intended impact is important in prioritizing and designing an evaluation plan. The Professional Development Outcomes Planner and Survey (Appendix B) are designed to assist evaluators in determining intended impact and evaluating outcomes and a variety of levels.

Determining the ‘stakes’ or importance of programs and their outcomes

Several considerations are weighed when determining stakes of programs and their outcomes including:

- Program cost - Programs that are expensive need to be proven effective and if not improved or abandoned.
- Importance of outcomes (e.g., implications of program failure) - Certain programs have serious implications for failure. Participants of CPR courses are tested for proficiency because outcomes may mean the difference between life and death. A program intended to inservice teachers in assessing statewide testing can also have serious implications if participants are poorly trained.
- Perceived importance of program/outcomes by stakeholders and audiences – In some cases the reason a program is being evaluated has to do with a request by an audience (e.g., a funding source). It is important to know the evaluation information these important audiences are looking for.

When outcomes are very important, professional developers and evaluators need to make sure that the program is effective in achieving the intended results. Therefore, high quality, defensible measures are selected. For example, you may want to observe someone scoring ELA assessments rather than ask them if they know how to score accurately.

Formative versus Summative Evaluations

Whether the evaluation is being conducted in order to determine success or failure (summative evaluation), or to make improvements through adjustments based on ongoing feedback (formative evaluation), has a significant impact on the measures used and who receives the information. Below are some examples of formative and summative questions that might be included in a Center Evaluation:

Summative	Formative
Should we continue a particular inservice/course based on attendance and	Based on participant feedback, what might a presenter do to improve her inservice

satisfactory participant ratings?	course?
How many people are using the Resource Library?	What might increase teachers' use of the Resource Library?
Did participants in the inservice/course implement key objectives as taught?	What were obstacles to teacher implementation that should be addressed to make to program more successful?
Did students make significant gains as a direct result of the program?	How could the program be improved to optimize student outcomes?

Understanding the evaluation 'context'

Contextual factors influence how the evaluation is conducted and how it may be interpreted. These factors must be weighed in the planning stage:

- What time and resource constraints do we have to conduct the evaluation?
- Are there hidden (or not so hidden) political agendas associated with the program?
- Has the program had the opportunity to be effective? (Don't kill something before it has had the chance to show itself as effective.)
- Will the evaluation results be challenged? (If so the supporting data should be very strong and clearly communicated.)
- What is the historical context of the program?
- How could the context affect information collection?

Answering these questions help the evaluator to decide whether or not to evaluate a particular program. He or she may also choose to use an external evaluator (to avoid a conflict of interest or accusation of bias). In some contexts (e.g. a program that is still in development) the evaluator may choose to conduct a formative as opposed to a summative evaluation.

Prioritizing what to evaluate

Now that evaluation targets, audiences, stakeholders, and the context is understood, the evaluator can begin to prioritize. These priorities may change as the evaluator takes a realistic look at resources to collect and analyze information.

Generating questions

Meaningful questions are the heart of the evaluation. Too few and the evaluation is not comprehensive enough. Too many questions and the quality of the information may be compromised or resources stretched in a way that could hurt the program. Qualities of good questions include:

- Relevant to the purpose of the evaluation and program goals so that they are useful for important decisions;
- Important to the identified audience(s);
- Comprehensive enough to provide adequate information about what is being evaluated;
- Constructed in ways that information is balanced and not bias;
- Answerable with realistic means and at a reasonable cost.

Questions should be framed in observable, unambiguous terms. It is also important to frame questions with a feasible assessment in mind.

Once major questions have been identified, sub-questions are generated that provide other important information with relatively low expenditure of resources. It is important to remember that once a question is asked, the information has to be collated, analyzed accurately and communicated (avoid collecting data and then not using it). For example, while direct observation and open-ended questions may yield important information, five hundred observations/responses will take some time to collect and analyze in a meaningful way.

Here are a few tips for asking questions in ways that resulting information can be organized, distilled and communicated:

- Collect only information that you can use
- Data is only useable if you can make sense of it and communicate it to others
- Beware of opportunities to hear only what you want to hear
- Remember that you may be the one that has to crunch a mountain of data; when possible, use multiple choice/selection responses.
- Use tried and true measures when they can provide meaningful information.
- When developing your own questions, run them by a few people first to make sure that they are clear and understood in the way you intend them to be.

Existing data or sources of information

Identifying existing information or information sources is one way of using resources efficiently. Some examples of this are:

- Use of assessment data being collected by another organization For example, student achievement data collected by a school district that is related to the program being evaluated. In this case it is important to use caution that the information being used is relevant and sensitive enough to be a fair assessment of program outcomes.
- Archival data such as attendance, school suspensions, CSE referral rates, documented use of materials, website hit rates take little effort to collect and may be related to program outcomes.
- Intensive evaluation efforts conducted during a previous year may not have to be replicated every year. Instead, focus on another program.
- Programs that have a very strong base in research may require less evaluation of efficacy than unproven programs. However, it is important to have stringent criteria for what is 'evidence based'. Many programs purport to be research

based, but do not have strong backing. It may also be important to evaluate how the program is conducted locally.

Very organized evaluators may collaborate with organizations to share evaluation efforts.

Determine whether or not aspects of the evaluation are feasible and or appropriate

Considering available resources (e.g., money, time, personnel) and the context of the evaluation, is it possible to answer these questions meaningfully and in a way that the results will be used? This is a reality check stage before beginning to seriously plot out the procedures, resources measures and calendar for the evaluation. If the answer is yes, proceed in designing the evaluation. If the answer is no, the evaluator may need to reconsider the question or in some cases opt not to conduct an evaluation at all.

Design the Evaluation

Once questions are generated, begin to identify measures for answering them. As measures are identified or created, the questions may be altered to 'fit' the assessment. Below are different evaluation *processes*. Consider what type of design fits your needs.

Fixed versus emerging - Some evaluations are fixed. That is all procedures and measures are identified up front and the evaluation goes according to its plan. Other evaluations are emerging. Emerging evaluations are more flexible. As information is collected new questions may be identified and incorporated into the evaluation. Many evaluations use a combination of both. You need to have a plan, but it is good to address emerging information.

Formative versus summative – As discussed previously, some evaluation questions are designed to make a final conclusion (summative), while other evaluations obtain ongoing feedback in an effort to make program adjustments (formative). The goal of summative evaluation is to prove or disprove programs while the goal of formative evaluation is to *improve* programs.

Experimental versus natural inquiry – Evaluations involving experimental design collect information on those receiving a program and those not receiving a program (or the same person before during and or after a program) in order to prove that it makes a significant intended impact on participants. Natural inquiry simply investigates what happens when a program occurs.

Focus on program outcomes versus the process involved in the program – You can evaluate the quality of the widgets (outcome), efficiency and cost effectiveness of the process in which they are made, or both.

Develop an Evaluation Calendar (Appendix C)

Once the above planning and design information is collected, begin to organize it on a timeline. Use a calendar to determine how the evaluation will unfold. Don't forget to include organizational activities such as any assessment training that might be needed, organizational meetings/contacts, data analysis and sharing procedures. When possible, plan to contact audiences and get them involved. This way, they are more likely to take ownership of the evaluation results and utilize them. Identify ways that evaluation tasks can be delegated to appropriate parties (e.g., inservice/course instructors). The evaluation calendar should be another reality check to make sure that the evaluation plan is a feasible one.

Evaluation Planner Instructions

Step I. Use the attached Evaluation Planner Spreadsheet to organize information about your Centers programs/activities/resources. Additional information about the topics below may be found in programevaluation.org Quickcourse topic: “Focusing the Evaluation”.

A. List all of the programs/activities that your Center provides

Briefly provide names of programs, courses, resources that your Center provides. These will be referred to as ‘programs’ that your Center provides.

B. Who is a direct participant of the program?

List people (e.g., science teachers, kindergarten students, grandparents) who participate in or use the program/resource/activity directly.

C. Who is affected by the program indirectly?

List those who may benefit indirectly as a result of participants’ use of the program/resource/activity.

D. With whom will part or all of the evaluation information be shared? (The evaluation ‘audience’)

List those who may see or hear about information contained in the evaluation (e.g., community members who read an article in the paper, State Ed who receives a report, funders, Board of Education, your Teacher Center). Pay particular attention to those who have asked you for evaluation information.

E. Rate the stakes of this program (e.g., High stakes – a program with high cost, high public visibility, or outcomes are extremely important).

Consider cost, importance of outcomes and other aspects of the program and rate it as high, medium or low stakes.

F. For each program/activity/resource decide whether you interested in an evaluation that helps you to improve program components (formative), an evaluation that looks at the success that it has in meeting its goals or both?

Consider why you are interested in conducting an evaluation.

Formative evaluation is it to make improvements to the program. You will probably want to examine components essential to the effective running of the program and see how improvements can strengthen the program.

Summative evaluation demonstrates how well the program achieved important objectives. Success is generally determined by use of the program and how it has accomplished key objectives.

G. Is there already documented effectiveness of this program?

Think of whether or not the program already has documented effectiveness. Perhaps you put a great deal of time and energy into evaluating a certain program last year. Despite the importance of the program, you may want to focus on something else this year. Or perhaps you implemented a program with a proven track record (e.g., evidenced through more than one empirical studies). You may not need to prove the efficacy of the program again, however you may want to evaluate how it was used by your center.

Step II. Prioritize the top three to five programs that you want to take a serious look at this year. This is only a tentative list.

Consider the information that you have organized on the Evaluation Planner Worksheet. Rank the top five programs that you want to evaluate.

Step III. Complete the Evaluation Focusing Worksheet for each program you are considering to evaluate. Describe program components and intended outcomes of the program.

1. For each program you are considering, describe how you would know if program components were in place and how the program would impact participants if it were successful (program outcomes). Then jot down some potential ways that objectives might be assessed. Consider the feasibility of the proposed outcome measure (think of your resources and the willingness of others to participate in the evaluation). In the example below program components to be evaluated are designated with (PC) and program outcomes are designated with (PO).

Example program: Peer tutoring

Participant	Impact	Possible outcome measures	Who can help to collect?	Feasibility
Tutor trainers	Recruit tutors and tutees from classroom teachers (PC)	Archival information (records of students trained)	Trainers complete forms	Easy
	Train tutors according to the program steps (PC)	Checklist of training steps	Trainers complete forms	Easy
	Monitor and coach tutors (PC)	Coaching checklist	Trainers complete forms	Will need to build into program

Participant	Impact	Possible outcome measures	Who can help to collect?	Feasibility
Tutors	Follow the prescribed tutoring steps (PC)	Coaching checklist, Self – report checklist	Tutors complete forms	Will need to build into program
	Attend sessions regularly (PC)	Self report checklist	Tutors complete forms	Will need to may self report easy to complete
	Improve reading fluency (PO)	Curriculum-Based Assessment	Trainers? TAs? Interns?	Difficult. Will need to identify and train resources. Perhaps Only tutees will be assessed.
Tutees	Improve reading fluency (PO)	Curriculum-Based Assessment	Trainers? TAs? Interns?	Difficult. Will need to identify and train resources. Perhaps only the most at risk tutees will be assessed.
Classroom teachers	Satisfied with program (PO)	Teacher survey	Teachers	Probably easy

2. As you identify components to investigate, desired outcomes and feasible ways to evaluate them consider whether you have the resources to conduct a quality evaluation. If you do not have the resources to conduct a meaningful evaluation, you may want to consider modifying the evaluation plan to make it more feasible, identifying other resources to assist with the evaluation, or waiting to evaluate that particular program when you have enough resources.

Step IV. Develop a Calendar to ‘rough out’ program activities, evaluation activities and evaluation dissemination activities. An example is provided below:

	Center programs/activities	Program participants	Who does the program/activity affect? (Stakeholders)	Evaluation audience	Stakes: (High, Med, Low)	Formative / Existing Summative data?	Rank importance
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Evaluation Focus Worksheet

Program: _____

Targets of impact	What will impact look like?	How could this be assessed?	Who could help to collect?	Feasibility
A.				
B.				
C.				

Professional Development Outcomes Planner

Course name: _____

Instructor: _____

Directions: This worksheet can be used by staff developers to describe course objectives, as well as identify means of observing their impact in classrooms.

Step one: Choose the intended level(s) of impact that will be the focus of the evaluation:

- Increased participant knowledge/awareness of issues related to training.
- Participant understanding of the relevance that the professional development activity can have for potential impact on their professional practice.
- Impact on participants' behavior, methods and or materials used in the classroom.
- Positive impact on students' classroom outcomes

Step two: For each level selected above, describe clear course objectives. For levels 3-4, indicate how implementation might be assessed. Instructors may want to complete this worksheet in collaboration with course participants. Ongoing assessment and feedback can be provided at sessions following implementation of key course objectives.

1. Professional development knowledge/awareness objectives

The three most important things that participants will learn as the result of attending this professional development activity are:

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

2. Professional development relevance/potential for implementation

As the result of this professional development activity, participants will understand the relevance/importance or potential impact of _____ in their professional setting.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

Classroom/school implementation and or student outcome levels

3. Professional development classroom/school outcomes

Participants will be able to implement the following course objectives in their professional setting:

How could this be assessed?

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

Professional development student outcomes

If educators implement skills taught, students will _____
(Please describe in observable terms and list assessment)

How could this be assessed?

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

5. Please list other ways in which evidence of impact can be assessed for this professional development activity.

Step three: Use information on this Outcomes Planner form to complete the Professional Development Outcomes Survey template (attached). Instructors may want to do this in collaboration with participants.

Professional Development Outcomes Survey

Course name: _____

Instructor: _____

Week of: _____

Directions: Please rate the degree to which you were able to implement the course objectives using the following key:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all		Inconsistently/partly			Entirely

1. Professional development teacher objectives

As the result of this professional development activity I was able to: Rating

A. _____ _____

B. _____ _____

C. _____ _____

2. Professional development student outcomes

Upon implementation students were able to: Rating

A. _____ _____

B. _____ _____

C. _____ _____

3. Please attach any evidence of implementation or impact (e.g., procedural checklists, logs, journal entries, student data).

4. Please describe any impediments (e.g., lack of materials, support, resources, training) that need to be addressed for consistent, successful implementation to be achieved.

5. Please describe strategies that you used to make implementation easier and or more successful.

6. (Optional) What are some other ways that the professional development had important impact on your practice?

7. (Optional) What are some other ways that the professional development had important impact on student outcomes in your classroom?

General comments:

Would you like follow up? yes no

Please provide contact information (phone/e-mail) so that any questions or difficulties implementing objectives can be addressed.

Program Calendar

District leaders worked with the Teacher Center Director, Policy Board (comprised of teachers in the district) and course instructors to develop a program calendar that provides specific timelines for the program and its evaluation. Staff in the district had provided input concerning district needs and the proposed programs during the previous year.

Sept. 10	Sept. 15, 16	Sept. 18	Oct. 1	Oct. 5	Oct. 10	Oct. 15	Oct. 20
<p>All district staff notified about program and timeline at faculty meeting.</p> <p>15 minute presentation (principal)</p>	<p>Eight staff in each building trained to conduct and score CBM reading.</p> <p>Full Day training (Psychologist)</p>	<p>All administrators, teaching and support staff in district trained to use and understand CBA, as well as how to conduct and score CBM writing. One hour after school training.</p> <p>(Psychologist)</p>	<p>First CBM assessment district wide</p> <p>(Trained assessors)</p>	<p>Trained assessors score CBM results. Monitored/coached by trainer.</p>	<p>Peer Tutor trainers trained. Half day workshop for 2 staff in each building.</p> <p>Group 1 Brain Compatible Learning - Session A; 3 hour session with 20 Teachers</p>	<p>Second CBM assessment district wide (trained assessors).</p>	<p>Peer tutor training. First session in each building (Two staff train three groups of 10 children).</p> <p>Group 1 Brain Compatible Learning - Session B 3 hour session with 20 Teachers</p>
Oct. 22	Oct. 25	Oct. 29	Nov. 1	Nov. 3	Nov. 4	Feb. 8	Feb. 10
<p>Peer tutor training. Second session in each building (Two staff train three groups of 10 children)</p> <p>Group 2 Brain Comp. Learning. Session A; 3 hour session with 25 teachers</p>	<p>Group 2 Brain Comp. Learning. Session B; 3 hour session with 25 teachers</p>	<p>Stop Drop and Read training. 27 teachers in a 3 hour session.</p>	<p>Third CBM assessment district wide (trained assessors).</p>	<p>All programs are implemented.</p>	<p>CBM data (Oct. 1, Oct. 15 and Nov. 1) is shared. Up to 20 at risk students are chosen for weekly monitoring based on CBM data and teacher nomination. Weekly and monthly monitoring continues.</p>	<p>Booster sessions #1 with course instructors.</p> <p>(Stipended after school session)</p>	<p>Alt. Booster sessions #1 with course instructors.</p> <p>(Stipended Saturday session)</p>