2005–06 Local Systemic Change
Professional Development Observations
Guidelines for Evaluators

The Professional Development Observation Protocol should be used to record and rate observations of LSC professional development sessions for the core evaluation. Each project is required to conduct 5–8 professional development observations in each year that professional development is offered.[1] All members of the evaluation team, including those individuals conducting professional development observations, must be approved by NSF. Lead Evaluators are required to personally conduct at least three of these observations. All other observers of professional development sessions must have been trained either by HRI or by the Lead Evaluator. Professional development training materials are available from HRI.

Sample Selection
Interviews with the PI and other project team members are a part of the core evaluation. These interviews should familiarize the evaluator with both the goals of the LSC professional development and the project design for achieving those goals.

The most important consideration in selecting the sample of professional development sessions to be observed is making sure to include sessions that address each of the major functions of the LSC (providing teachers an opportunity to deepen their content knowledge; helping teachers learn the appropriate pedagogy to develop students' conceptual understanding of mathematics/science; and helping teachers learn how to use the designated instructional materials and providing support as the teachers implement the materials in the classroom). In many projects, multiple professional development approaches are used to achieve a particular purpose; evaluators should try to observe a variety of these approaches but not at the expense of covering all of the purposes.

Described below are examples of design features evaluators might consider as they select observations that are linked to the professional development goals and strategies.

- Some programs take an integrated approach to professional development in which multiple goals are addressed in each session. For example, a project might organize professional development activities around modules/kits being adopted for LSC classroom use for several purposes: to familiarize teachers with the module activities, to enhance their understanding of the underlying concepts of the topics addressed by the module, and to build their capacity to use particular pedagogical strategies. The evaluator might select a couple of these sessions to observe, and be aware of how all of these purposes are being addressed in each session. In contrast, if content and logistics for using the modules are addressed in separate sessions, at least one of each should be observed.

- If the project is designed to work with teacher leaders who then work with other teachers, observations should include at least one session that targets leadership development, as well as at least one session in which the observer will see the leaders "in action."

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[1] Projects that are not conducting professional development between September 1, 2005 and March 31, 2006 should contact HRI.

- If the professional development strategy includes a summer institute followed by school-based sessions or study groups throughout the academic year, the observations should include some of each type of session.

- If the professional development strategy includes some "special topics" sessions intended to focus on particular aspects of curriculum implementation—e.g., intense focus on a particular pedagogical strategy such as inquiry-based instruction, in-depth work on questioning strategies, or targeted attention to assessment issues—the evaluator may want to be sure to include at least one such session among those that will be observed.

- Providing periodic closure that adequately "pulls together" professional development experiences has been a particularly challenging area for some LSC projects. Because this is such a critical feature of effective professional development, the evaluator should make a special effort to schedule an observation at a time when wrap-up and closure of a session or cluster of sessions is likely to occur.

Please note that evaluators of Final Year projects will be asked to describe the criteria used to select sessions for observation in the 2005–06 core evaluation report.

Some logistical notes:

- The segment of professional development included on a single observation protocol should *not* exceed one-half day.

- In cases where a single professional development session consists of multiple break-out sessions, the observer should select one of the break-out sessions and observe it long enough to complete the Professional Development Observation Protocol. Afterward, the observer may wish to circulate to other break-out sessions to gain a more complete view of the nature and quality of the professional development.

- Use this protocol for all professional development observations selected for the core evaluation, including sessions that are different from the "typical" event-based professional development activity (e.g., a study group, a coaching/mentoring session, a session that targets administrators). As with any observation, complete only those sections and items that are applicable.

- Please note that the Web system will accept only two professional development observations for a given date. If you anticipate the need to submit more than two observations for a particular day, please e-mail HRI (lsc@horizon-research.com) to explain the circumstances *prior* to attempting to complete the forms on the Web.

Pre-Observation Interview

The observer should conduct a brief pre-observation interview (by phone or in person) with the session facilitator two or three days prior to the observation in order to learn the purpose(s), context, structure, and length of the session. The Pre-Observation Interview with Professional Development Facilitator protocol provides suggested questions for this purpose; you can modify the questions to fit your interviewing style. Some information on the interview protocol will likely have been discussed with the PI in the process of selecting professional development activities for observation; it is still important to ask these questions of the session facilitator to establish the facilitator's view of the purposes and his/her understanding of the targeted participants' needs and experiences. The information gained through the interview will contribute to completing the Professional Development Observation Protocol and, ultimately, to answering the core evaluation questions. The results of the pre-observation interviews should not be sent to HRI.

Please note that the core evaluation does not include a post-observation interview with the session facilitator. Occasionally, the observer may need additional information to assess the quality of the session. For example, the session may have played out differently than anticipated; the purpose of the session may seem to have changed since the pre-interview; or what comes next may influence the rating of the session. In such cases, the observer will need to ask clarifying questions following the observation.

Professional Development Observation

Prior to conducting professional development observations, review the Professional Development Observation Protocol so that you can focus your attention on the specific areas addressed in the protocol.

You may wish to complete the first part of the Session Demographics (found in Section One of the Professional Development Observation Protocol form) while the session is in progress and then take the kind of field notes you would ordinarily take. We recommend that you *do not* complete any other parts of the form during the observation, but complete the remainder of the form as soon as possible after the observation.

Completing the Professional Development Observation Protocol

The Professional Development Observation Protocol form is designed to be completed by the person conducting the observation, whether that is the Lead Evaluator or another member of the evaluation team. Observers should complete this form based on the segment of the professional development session that was actually observed. The observer can include comments to report any pertinent information about activities occurring prior to or following the observed session.

Observers should base judgments for all ratings on current standards for exemplary practice. Refer to the following documents for background: NCTM's *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics* (2000) and NRC's *National Science Education Standards* (1996). In addition, the Annotated Guide to the Professional Development Protocol should be consulted when completing the Professional Development Observation Protocol.

Section One: Contextual Background and Activities
Section One requests basic descriptive information about the session and does not require ratings. Mark the items that are applicable to the observed session, skipping over items that do not apply.

Section Two: Ratings
In Section Two, observers are requested to complete a series of ratings of the professional development session, beginning with ratings of several distinct categories and ending with the selection of a capsule description that best represents the session.

Key Indicators: Section Two contains six categories with key indicators to be rated. The categories are Design; Implementation; Mathematics/Science Content; Exploring Pedagogy/ Instructional Materials; Leadership Content; and Culture of the Professional Development Session.

We anticipate that you may mark a number of the individual items in each category "Don't Know" or "N/A" (Not Applicable), since any one session is not likely to provide evidence of every possible component of professional development. Ratings of "not applicable" should be made when the attribute described in the key indicator is not there, but its absence is not detrimental to the session. If the attribute is one whose absence negatively impacts the quality of the session, it should receive a low rating. In most cases, your ratings will be based on what you actually observed during the session. However, there are a few ratings that depend on the contextual information the facilitator provides in the pre-observation interview.

Synthesis Ratings: You should provide a synthesis rating for each of the six categories in the protocol (unless you have checked the box that indicates an entire category is inappropriate for rating the session in Categories III, IV, or V). Your synthesis rating in a category should not be a simple average of ratings for the key indicators, but should reflect your judgment of the importance of the various indicators in determining the quality of the session.

Supporting Evidence for Synthesis Rating: You should provide supporting evidence for your synthesis ratings, noting factors, including information from the pre-observation interview, that were most influential in determining the overall rating for each category.

Overall Ratings of the Session: This last section is one in which you should synthesize all available information about the session to assess its overall quality. For most sessions involving teachers or teacher leaders (except those with the sole purpose of exploring strategies/issues/roles of teacher leaders, principals, or others in leadership positions) evaluators should rate the likely impact of the session on participants' capacity to provide high quality mathematics/science education (Category VII.A.). Ratings of the likely impact on participants' leadership capacity (Category VII.B.) should be completed if teacher leaders were included as participants in the session, whether or not leadership issues were dealt with explicitly, and whether or not there were other participants as well. On the final page in the Professional Development Observation Protocol, provide a capsule description of the session. The observer should choose the "level" that best describes the observed session and provide a rationale for the selected capsule rating.

Please note that additional information about specific items on the protocol may be found in the Annotated Guide to the Professional Development Observation Protocol.

Submitting the Professional Development Observation Protocol via the Web

The observation protocol must be submitted to HRI via the Web. The 2005–06 Professional Development Observation Protocol will be available for data entry from November 1, 2005 until May 1, 2006. A recent standards–compliant web browser (e.g., IE 6.x, Netscape 7.x, Mozilla 1.x, or more recent versions) is recommended.

URL (Web Address)

The online observation protocol is available by selecting "Online Forms" from HRI's LSC core evaluation website at:

http://www.horizon-research.com/LSC

Username and Password

The online forms are password-protected. When prompted, enter the username "******" and the password "*******" (note that both the username and password should be all lower-case letters).

Partial vs. Complete Forms

Professional Development Observation protocols need not be completed in a single sitting. To submit a partial form, use the "Submit Partial Form" button. You may return to the form later to make changes and submit the form as complete using the "Submit Complete Form" button. Note that in order for a professional development protocol to be considered "received" by HRI, it must be submitted as complete; partial forms will not be included in a project's compliance data provided to NSF. Lead Evaluators and Principal Investigators may monitor their project's data collection status using the Lead Evaluator and Principal Investigator sections of HRI's LSC core evaluation website.

When a complete form is submitted, several checks will be performed to ensure that the form has been completely and consistently filled out. If necessary, you will be asked to correct problems and submit the form again.

Important: When a form has been received (whether as partial or complete), a screen confirming that your data have been successfully submitted will be displayed. This page will also display all of your completed responses; please print a copy for your records. If you do not see the phrase "successfully submitted," your form has not been received and your data will not be saved.

Downloading Data

Lead Evaluators may download their project's Professional Development Observation protocol data from the Lead Evaluator section of HRI's LSC core evaluation website.

For Assistance

E-mail Kristen Malzahn (lsc@horizon-research.com) at HRI if you have any questions about the Professional Development Observation protocol (or any other aspects of the core evaluation).