

Out-of-School Time Resource Center: Conference and Workshop Surveys

Introduction

The Out-of-School Time Resource Center (OSTRC) is part of the University of Pennsylvania's School of Social Policy and Practice. The OSTRC promotes out-of-school time (OST) student achievement by enhancing staff support and professional development. To that end, it identifies and coordinates professional development resources and opportunities; conducts research on, provides technical assistance for, and evaluates professional development; and recommends changes in professional development practice and policy.

OSTRC Surveys

In its effort to enhance OST professional development, the OSTRC created surveys to evaluate the impact of OST conferences and workshops. Currently, these instruments include Workshop Surveys, Presenter Self-Assessments, Overall Conference Surveys, and Follow-Up Workshop/Conference Surveys. The Workshop and Overall Conference Surveys measure participants' initial opinions. The Presenter Self-Assessments ask facilitators about their workshop. Lastly, the Follow-Up Surveys assess impact.

The Workshop Surveys and Presenter Self-Assessments are distributed and collected as paper copies immediately after the workshops. The Follow-Up Surveys are administered via an on-line survey tool, and the Overall Conference Surveys can be implemented physically or electronically. All data are entered into a statistical database (SPSS). Once the data has been entered, cleaned, and analyzed, OSTRC staff produce interim and final reports detailing findings and recommendations.

Professional Development Indicators

The OSTRC surveys ask respondents to rate eight professional development indicators, using a 5-point Likert scale (e.g., strongly agree - strongly disagree). These indicators are distributed among 3 overarching categories:

Category One: Impact on Participants

A. Indicators

- One: Satisfaction
- Two: Acquisition of new knowledge and skills
- Three: Belief in the importance of the topic
- Four: Perception of professional identity

B. Sample Questions (from the Workshop and Overall Conference Surveys)

- Were you satisfied with this event?
- How would you rate your level of knowledge/skill (before and after the event)?
- How would you rate your belief in the importance of the topic (before and after the event)?
- Did this event contribute to your professional identity?

Category Two: Impact on Programs/Organizations

A. Indicators

- Five: Institutional support and integration
- Six: Application
- Seven: Extension/modification

B. Sample Questions (from the Follow-Up Surveys)

- Did you have the support of your administrators to apply this new knowledge/skill?
- Did you apply this new knowledge/skill in your work with youth?
- Did you share this new knowledge/skill with colleagues?

Category Three: Impact on Children/Youth

A. Indicator

- Eight: Children/youth outcomes

B. Sample Question (from the Follow-Up Surveys)

- Did the youth in your program benefit from this knowledge/skill?

These indicators are based on empirical research (Buher-Kane, Peter, Olitsky, Kinnevy, 2006; National Staff Development Council, 2008) and the work of education researchers Donald Kirkpatrick (1996), Thomas Guskey (2000) and Joellen Killion (2002). The OSTRC surveys also integrate information from other disciplines and perspectives, such as adult learning theory, Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1983), change theory, and the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (Louks-Horsley, 1996). All of these elements and considerations contribute significantly to effective professional development experiences (The Afterschool Corporation, 2000).

Promising Practices

The OSTRC surveys also focus on promising practices in professional development, particularly those that have been linked to increased likelihood of participant application. Examples of these promising practices are adequate presenter preparation, opportunities for participant networking, the use of interactive activities, and content relevance. Thus, questions on the Workshop and Overall Conference Surveys include, "Was the presenter/were the presenters well prepared?," "Were there opportunities to network with others?," and, "Was the content relevant?" The greater the number of promising practices integrated into the professional development experience, the more likely the knowledge and skills will be transferred to student learners (Partnership for Afterschool Education, 1999).

Additional Questions

The OSTRC surveys often include questions specific to the workshop or conference administrators. These typically address how participants learned about the event, the efficiency of the registration process, the length of time individuals have been associated with the host organization, and similar topics. This information helps administrators implement logistical improvements and develop marketing strategies for future events.

Demographic Data

Lastly, the OSTRC surveys collect important demographic data. This information includes participants' gender, level of education, race, age, zip code, job title and responsibilities, population(s) of youth served, and years of experience in the field. This demographic data helps workshop and conference organizers identify their attendees and can demonstrate how different types of professional development may impact different audiences.

Conclusion

The OSTRC's workshop and conference surveys are based on extensive research in the field of effective professional development. They also incorporate three years of pilot tests, conducted with multiple organizations across the country and implemented by the OSTRC staff. As a result, the OSRTC created a series of instruments that formally measure the impact of professional development on staff, programs, and students.

References

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