

Evaluation Results

***Making Connections* Professional Development Workshop**

Forest Lake Elementary

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Introduction

In May 2005, staff at Forest Lake Elementary participated in the *Making Connections* professional development workshop. As a component of the project ImPACT evaluation, the South Carolina Educational Policy Center and the Office of Program Evaluation provided a professional development survey to Forest Lake Elementary School. The purpose of this survey is to offer participants the opportunity to provide feedback about various aspects about workshops in an effort to improve quality assurance. Forty-two participants in the workshop completed the Project ImPACT Professional Development Survey (see Appendix) about the effectiveness of *Making Connections*. The survey contained items about five areas: demographic information (questions 1 – 4), logistical information (questions 5 – 8), practical application of the workshop (questions 9 – 18), information about the presenter and presentation (questions 19 – 26), and finally, open-ended responses (questions 27 – 29). Prior to discussing the results from the closed-ended responses, an explanation of the methodology used in analyzing the data will be given. Characteristics of the workshop participants are also described.

Methodology

Apart from the demographic information, the closed-ended responses (logistics, practical application, and presenter/presentation information) are Likert-scaled items, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). For each closed-ended item, we determined the means for each items based on participants' aggregate responses. Possible means for each item range from 1 to 6. The standard deviations were also calculated for each survey item to note variability.

A domain analysis was conducted on the open-ended responses. Domain analysis seeks out semantic relationships between terms for inclusion into a cultural category (Spradley, 1980). For example, concepts phrased as “knowledge,” “learning,” and “understanding new

information” all have similarities so they can be collectively grouped (e.g., into a domain titled “in-depth study/learning”).

Once concepts are assigned to particular domains, the domains themselves can be organized into taxonomies to observe any relationships that may exist. For example, a domain of “team planning” and another domain of “team camaraderie” are related because they refer to “teamwork.” A taxonomic analysis thus fosters the ability to see themes (i.e., domains) in hierarchal or systematic fashion (Spradley, 1980). For this survey, both domain and taxonomic analyses were conducted. Once a core set of domains and taxonomies was established, a coding system was developed whereby each taxonomy was assigned a whole ordinal number (i.e. 2). The taxonomy was then subdivided into its constituent domains (i.e. 2.1, 2.2). As a result, we established numeric coding of all themes found in the participants’ responses. The benefits of such a system include the ability to readily code data, denote frequency of themes within responses, and to observe saliency of themes across responses.

Demographic Information

Forty-two participants completed the Project ImPACT Professional Development Workshop Survey. These participants were staff from Forest Lake Elementary School, in Richland District Two. Table 1 summarizes the demographics of the participants. Seventeen participants reported they teach Kindergarten – 2nd Grade and 16 reported they teach 3rd – 5th. Some of the participants teaching multiple grades reported their areas of concentration, such as art, physical education, and SLT. By far, most participants reported to be classroom teachers. Three others reported they were an “other teacher,” and an additional three reported some “other professional role,” (i.e., P.E., SLT, and guidance counselor).

Table 1

Demographics of Participants at Making Connections Workshop

Grade(s) Taught	<i>n</i>	Professional Role	<i>n</i>
Kindergarten – 2 nd Grade	17	Classroom Teacher	31
3 rd – 5 th Grade	16	Other Teacher	3
Multiple Grades	7	Other	3
N/A	1	Media Specialist	2
No Answer	1	Guidance Counselor	1
		No Answer	2

Closed-Ended Items

Following is a discussion of the results from the closed-ended items. The first section of questions analyzed sought information about logistic of the training (i.e., time, location, and atmosphere). As shown in Table 2, workshop participants' responses on items 5 through 8 were positive with means ranging from 5.76 to 5.93. The statement with the highest mean (5.93) was, "The workshop location was convenient and accessible." The statement with the lowest mean (5.76) was, "The food and beverages provided were adequate."

Table 2

Results of Logistical Information Questions

Question Number	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
5	The workshop location was convenient and accessible.	5.93	0.34
6	The facilities were adequate (room temperature, size, space, cleanliness).	5.83	0.44
8	The meeting schedule (i.e., beginning and ending times, breaks, time for lunch) was appropriate.	5.83	0.44
7	The food and beverages provided were adequate.	5.76	0.48

The second set of questions sought responses about practical information of the workshop (i.e., strategies discussed and ideas presented). As shown in Table 3, workshop participants' responses on items 9 through 18 were positive with means ranging from 5.00 to 5.86. The statement with the highest mean (5.86) was, "The handouts were clear and

complete.” The statement with the lowest mean (5.00) was, “I already use most of the strategies presented today.”

Table 3

Results of Practical Information Questions

Question Number	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
14	The handouts were clear and complete.	5.86	0.42
15	The visual aids were easy to read.	5.83	0.44
9	The content of this workshop will be useful to me.	5.79	0.47
18	I plan to use the instructional strategies presented today in my classroom.	5.76	0.48
10	My understanding of the topic presented has increased.	5.64	0.53
13	The demonstrations of strategies were useful.	5.62	0.66
12	The instructional strategies acquired in this workshop will help me improve student learning.	5.60	0.63
17	The workshop has deepened my understanding of the instructional strategies presented today.	5.55	0.63
11	I have learned new instructional strategies in this workshop.	5.52	0.67
16	I already use most of the strategies presented today.	5.00	0.95

The third section of questions sought information about the presenter and the presentation (i.e., how the workshop was facilitated). As shown in Table 4, workshop participants’ responses on items 19 through 26(a) were positive with means ranging from 5.74 to 5.88. The statement with the highest mean (5.88) was, “The presenter(s) were knowledgeable.” The statement with the lowest mean (5.74) was, “The presenter(s) provided sufficient examples of application in the classroom.”

Table 4

Results of Presenter and Presentation Questions

Question Number	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
19	The presenter(s) were knowledgeable.	5.88	0.40
20	The presenter(s) kept the discussion focused.	5.83	0.49
24	The presenter(s) provided sufficient opportunities for the participants to share and discuss information.	5.83	0.44
21	The presenter(s) encouraged participation.	5.81	0.51
22	The presenter(s) were well prepared.	5.81	0.45
23	The presenter(s) were able to answer questions from the participants.	5.81	0.45
26(a)	Overall, this was a good workshop.	5.81	0.51
26	The presenter(s) connected the workshop ideas and strategies to the magnet theme.	5.76	0.53
25	The presenter(s) provided sufficient examples of application in the classroom.	5.74	0.54

Open-Ended Items

Participants were asked to respond to three open-ended questions about the workshop.

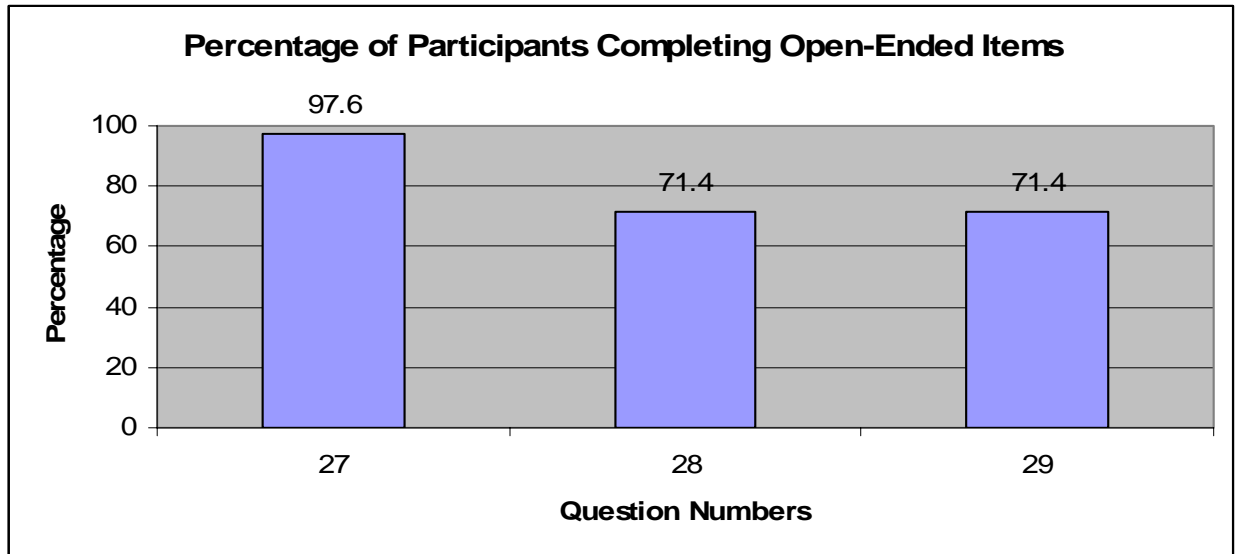
These included:

- 27. List ONE strength of this workshop.
- 28. List ONE improvement you would suggest for this workshop.
- 29. From this workshop, what is ONE thing you want to know more about?

Chart 1 below delineates the percentage of participants who responded to the open-ended questions. About 98% ($n = 41$) of the participants answered the item 27. Approximately 71% ($n = 30$) of the participants answered item 28. Additionally, 71.4% ($n = 30$) of the participants answered item 29.

Chart 1

Percentage of Participants Completing the Open-Ended Items



Question 27 asked participants to name one strength of the workshop. As shown in Table 6, the two themes that were most often described as strengths of the workshop were “teamwork” and “time allocation.” Approximately 51% ($n = 21$) of participants who responded to this item indicated that teamwork was an important aspect of this workshop. Specifically, team planning and the ability to share or network with other teachers were mentioned most frequently. About 17% ($n = 7$) of the responses to this item described the time allocation of workshop events to be a strength. One participant commented, “***We got a lot of good work done that we can use in the fall.***”

For the remaining categories, about 10% ($n = 4$) of the respondents referred to the presentation and presenter as a strength. An additional 7.3% ($n = 3$) believed the workshop materials were a strength. The remainder of respondents (14.6%, $n = 6$) listed other strengths that did not fit into any of the classifications listed below.

Table 6

Frequency of Themes about the Workshop's Strengths

Code	Definition	Frequency
1	Teamwork	21
1.1	Team planning	9
1.2	Sharing/networking with other teachers and staff members	6
1.3	Team building	3
1.4	Team spirit, camaraderie	3
2	Time allocation	7
2.1	Time for preparation of activities for the next school year	5
2.2	Ample time to work on assignments given	1
2.3	After sharing strategies, time was allowed to incorporate them into lessons while still fresh on our minds	1
3	Presentation	4
3.1	Knowledgeable/enthusiastic presenter	2
3.2	Well-organized	1
3.3	The presentations, the different ways teachers utilize technology in their classrooms	1
4	Materials	3
4.1	Good books to read, good choice or professional reading	2
4.2	It was a working experience...walking away with useful materials	1
5	Other	6
5.1	Encouraged use of technology as a seamless part of teaching and learning	2
5.2	The idea of "Book Pass" and how to incorporate it into the classroom	1
5.3	Focus	1
5.4	Allowing us time to work when we are not overloaded with other work/past year is still fresh in memory	1
5.5	Hands-on application	1

Item 28 asked participants to suggest one improvement for the workshop. As shown in Table 7, the two categories most often described as areas to improve were "presentation content/approach" and "scheduling." About 37% ($n = 11$) of participants who responded to this question indicated they believed that the presentation needed to be improved. Time allocation was the most frequent topic mentioned, with respondents commenting that they would like more time for learning about and working with new technology.

Approximately 17% ($n = 5$) of respondents wanted an improvement in the scheduling of the workshop. For example, one participant noted, "***It was so hard having to come the first week out of school...however, having it closer to the beginning of school gives less time***

to create tech. projects.” Another exemplar from the responses read, “[*The workshop should be condensed to 3 days. Do it immediately after school is out or just before school starts back.*” The remaining 46.7% ($n = 14$) of respondents had other suggestions, ranging from improvements to logistics to requesting they be paid for attending.

Table 7

Frequency of Themes about Suggested Improvements for the Workshop

Code	Definition	Frequency
1	Presentation content/approach	11
1.1	Time allocation	7
1.3	More detailed explanation for long-range and short-range plans for new teachers	2
1.2	Make the opening day more interactive and demonstration-filled	1
1.4	More definition of terms	1
2	Scheduling	5
2.1	“It was so hard to come the first week out of school. However, having it closer to the beginning of school gives less time to create tech. projects.”	1
2.2	“Should be condensed to 3 days. Do it immediately after school is out or just before school starts back.”	1
2.3	“Hold closer to school starting (or do the last 2 days after last work day).”	1
2.4	“Having the workshop later in the summer instead of the week right after the last day of school.”	1
2.5	“Let’s have this closer to the beginning of school.”	1
5	Other	14
5.1	It was great	2
5.2	Keep the room a little warmer	1
5.3	A guided way to “publish” our product	1
5.4	More sharing	1
5.5	We should get paid for it	1
5.6	?	1
5.7	None	4
5.8	N/A (not applicable)	3

Item 29 asked participants to list one thing they wanted to know more about with regards to the workshop. As shown in Table 8, participants who responded to this item overwhelmingly listed “technology” as the area they wanted to learn more about. Eighty percent ($n = 24$) of respondents wanted to learn more about SmartBoard activities, lessons, presentations, and websites, or other similar technology and ways to implement these in the classroom. The

remaining 20% ($n = 6$) of respondents listed other things they wanted to learn about, such as collaborative conferences or evaluating personal classroom effectiveness.

Table 8

Frequency of Requests for Continued Learning

Code	Definition	Frequency
1	Technology	24
1.1	SmartBoard activities, lessons, presentations, and websites	18
1.2	Implementing more technology in various ways	3
1.3	How to make interactive lessons to use in classroom	1
1.4	More time to work on computer projects	1
1.5	Planning more using EdCompass website	1
5	Other	6
5.1	I'm looking forward to the book studies	1
5.2	How to best pre-assess and evaluate based on personal classroom effectiveness when teaching and beginning to make connections	1
5.3	I am reading (and chose my book about) strategies to use with struggling readers	1
5.4	Collaborative conferences	1
5.5	Additional suggestions for integration	1
5.8	N/A (not applicable)	1

Part VI: Commendations and Recommendations

For the closed-ended questions, all of the means exceeded 5 on a 6-point Likert scale. Specifically, participants indicated a) satisfaction with the logistics of the workshop, b) satisfaction with the practical application of the workshop (i.e., feeling they benefited from the content of the workshop), and finally c) satisfaction with the presentation and the presenter(s). Additionally, feedback from the teachers at Forest Lake Elementary indicates that the *Making Connections* workshop provided valuable ideas for use in their classrooms.

Responding to the open-ended item asking about strengths of the workshop, participants indicated they benefited from the opportunity to work as a team. Others mentioned the allocation of time to work on the workshop assignments, and the knowledge, enthusiasm, and organization of the presenter. In response to items that asked about improving the workshop a number of participants stated that they would benefit from additional activities

related to SmartBoard. Participants also mentioned scheduling the workshop at a different time. When asked about what they would like to know more about, most of the participants also mentioned SmartBoard (e.g., activities and implementing it in the classroom).

Based on these data, it seems that overall the workshop provided valuable information to the staff at Forest Lake Elementary. It also seems, given the comments from the open-ended items, that future professional development opportunities should focus on activities of learning about, or using, SmartBoard activities in the classroom.

The South Carolina Educational Policy Center and the Office of Program Evaluation, USC , hope these data provide staff at Forest Lake Elementary and project IMPACT with useful information about the *Making Connections* workshop as well as information for future professional development.

Sources

Spradley, J.P. (1980). *Participant Observation*. Hartcourt College Publishers: Fort Worth.