Nothing that's worth doing is easy

Many principals I have worked with spend so much time planning and designing professional development that they have little time left to think about evaluation. The standardized evaluation survey, which includes Likert-scales and fill-in-the-blank responses, addresses presentation style, organization, and relevance as well as room temperature and quality of food. But, professional development evaluation needs to go further than those typical questions. Each of NSDC's standards begins with the same phrase: S*taff development that improves the learning of all students…* which indicates that the evaluation needs to determine whether staff development has impacted student learning.

The principal needs to **develop a comprehensive plan for conducting ongoing evaluation of staff development programs**. That plan includes eight elements (Killion, 2002). First the plan needs to specify evaluation questions. For example, *did student achievement in grades 3 and 5 increase at least one grade level as measured by the Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) during this academic yea*r? This question would be appropriate for a professional development program that focused on implementing a new reading program including new instructional practices.

Second, a comprehensive plan would determine **multiple data sources**. For example, the IRI is mentioned in the question above, and other data such as the state reading assessment and quarterly assessments might also be included. More than one data source lends more credibility to your evaluation. Third, the plan specifies **data collection methodologies**. This section of the plan identifies what data will be collected, who will collect it, and how frequently it will be collected. It is much more difficult or impossible to collect some data after-the-fact. That is why outlining all these details is helpful from the beginning of the process. Fourth, **data analysis strategies** are identified. For example, typical school data includes the collection of lessons plans but how to analyze those plans also needs to be determined. Analysis of lesson plans might involve developing a scoring rubric or specifying key words. The sixth step includes planning for **data interpretation**. This step uses pre-established criteria against which the findings of the evaluation will be measured to determine the level of impact. The evaluation question above established a criterion of one-year's growth in reading. When evaluation questions are written well, using a SMART goal format for example, the criteria for data interpretation are included in the question. The seventh step is to plan for **dissemination** — determine the audience and how it might want to learn about evaluation results. For example, grant funders usually need a written evaluation while school board members may want a short oral presentation.

Lastly, a comprehensive plan includes methods for **evaluating the evaluation**. This step involves having everyone reviewing and reflecting on the evaluation process to determine strengths, weaknesses, and necessary changes.

These are extensive processes that are necessary for multiple-year, comprehensive programming not single activities. So, don't throw away your one-page evaluation surveys, they're still useful for those solitary "events."

> **EVALUATION**
>
> Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact.

Pat Roy is co-author of *Moving NSDC's Staff Development Standards Into Practice: Innovation Configurations* (NSDC, 2003)

Learn more about the NSDC standards, www.nsdc.org/ standards/ index.cfm

REFERENCE

Killion, J. (2002). *Assessing impact: Evaluating staff development.* Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.