ACET, Inc.
Action Consulting and Evaluation Team

Fall 2003 **Issue 3**

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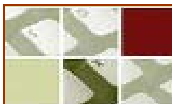

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Action Consulting and Evaluation Team

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ACET is an **independent research group** specializing in the evaluation of PK-16 educational and community-based programs.

Our consultants have extensive experience in conducting **high quality** research and evaluation in multicultural/bilingual settings.

We focus our efforts on **building capacity** through research and evaluation with a broad array of local and national communities and projects.

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For ACET Consultants Only

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ACET consultants provide a personalized experience in which program staff, families, students, and community partners are encouraged to participate and be an integrated part of the evaluation process. Program evaluation activities involve both *quantitative* (e.g. test score analyses, data management, surveys) and *qualitative* (e.g. interviews/focus groups, site visits) analysis.

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Charter Schools	Building Evaluation Capacity
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Teacher Preparation	Family and Child Development

Be sure to look on the back for this issue's research article!

Timing of Survey Administration

By Ann Ooms, M.A. (ACET Fall 2003 Intern)

Every year, parents and program participants are asked to complete surveys related to their experiences and satisfaction. Deciding when and how often to administer a survey is an important task and requires thoughtful consideration. The purpose of this article is to examine two common survey time models:

Model 1: Pre-and-post; and
Model 2: Post-and Follow-up.

The following table outlines the strengths, weaknesses, and best uses for each survey model.

Models	Situation for Best Use	Strengths	Weaknesses
Model 1: Pre-and-post 	• When the program is expected to have an impact within an extended but reasonable timeframe (typically, 6-12 months). • When a large majority of participants will be able to complete both a pre and a post survey (mobility will not be a large concern). • Questions are mainly about current attitudes, behavior, and knowledge.	• Baseline results are collected immediately and later compared to post survey results (easy to calculate and document change from pre-to-post). • The same survey or an equivalent form is administered each time (saves time on having to design multiple surveys). • Demographic data from the pre-survey can be examined to provide information about participants for reporting purposes. • Pre-survey results can be examined for programming purposes.	• Participants may be able to recall their previous answers. • The number of participants who completed both the pre-and-post may be small (you may not have enough respondents to report on impact). • Pre-survey administration may impact respondents' participation in program activities. • Extra demand on participants to complete both the pre-and-post survey. • Participants may get tired of answering the same questions.
Model 2: Post and Follow-up 	• When the program is expected to have an impact within a short timeframe (i.e., one-day or one-month workshop). • If mobility is a large concern, meaning participants may drop out or not continue until the end of the program. • Questions are mainly about program satisfaction and impact.	• Less demand on participants when they enter the program (often several forms must be completed at the start of the program). • Participants complete only the post-survey (saves administration time). • A follow-up survey (if participants are located) can provide information about the long-term impact of the program.	• No pre-survey data will be available (you will not be able to document and report information typically collected about participants in the pre-survey). • Baseline information is not available for comparisons. • Post-survey items typically ask retrospective questions. This type of question requires respondents to recall information that occurred in the past. Answers to retrospective questions might be less accurate if a post survey is not administered within a short timeframe.

Following are two key points to consider when planning a time schedule for administration.

- ✓ Expectations: Each time you administer a survey, program participants may interpret it as a sign that you expect change in their attitude, behavior, and knowledge. Participants may feel pressure and become unmotivated, frustrated, or embarrassed if they feel that they fail to meet those expectations.
- ✓ Annual Administration: If a survey is administered once a year, administer it at the same time each year to avoid potential seasonal variation in responses.

A creative way to substitute a pre-survey would be to use the information from an intake form as the baseline. Intakes are experienced as less of a burden because they are based on a structured personal conversation between client and service provider. Combining the two models, pre, post, and follow-up survey administrations, is an appropriate method to collect data over long periods of time (typically several years).

Following are a few sources that describe survey design, implementation and administration: (1) "Mail and Internet Surveys: the Tailored Design Method" by Don A. Dillman, and (2) "The Survey Kit" by Arlene Fink.