



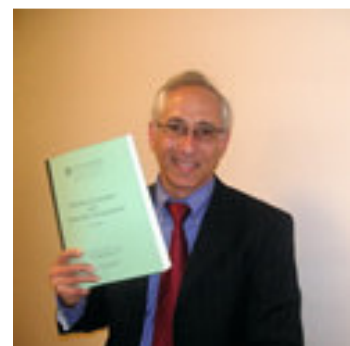
Newsletter

Fall 2008

Fetterman Set to "Empower" the OPEN Conference 2008

By Ellen Konrad, OPEN Reporter

The year was 1993, and the American Evaluation Association annual conference was being held in Dallas, Texas. The theme was "Empowerment Evaluation," a relatively new and emerging approach to evaluation practice. After having stirred up traditional AEA leadership earlier in his Presidential year with some unconventional—albeit participatory—actions (for example, asking Topical Interest Groups, local AEA affiliates, and others for opinions on the organization's future goals and direction!), Dr. David Fetterman then promised that a "mystery guest" would appear as one of his plenary speakers at the meeting.



The conference was abuzz with speculation. Attendees were indeed caught off guard one morning when a Mark Twain impersonator ambled into the crowd as the featured attraction and began a spirited dialogue with Dr. Fetterman! The title of this session and the substance of Mr. Twain's "remarks" are now lost to recollection and old conference materials. But it's safe to assume that his ruminations had something to do with the role of self-reflection and collaborating with colleagues in assessing his work within the context of journalistic and literary standards of the day.... I recount this remembrance to help pique your interest in attending OPEN's Fall Conference this year, and to assure you that you can "expect the unexpected" from our provocative, exuberant and unpredictable keynote speaker.

By now, most of us know that Empowerment Evaluation uses evaluation concepts, techniques, and findings to foster improvement and self-determination in programs and organizations. It is designed to help people help themselves and improve their programs using a form of self-evaluation and reflection. Its aim is to increase program success by providing stakeholders with tools for assessing the planning, implementation, and self-evaluation of their programs, and then by institutionalizing those processes.

Dr. David Fetterman, a key developer and proponent of Empowerment Evaluation, is the Director of Evaluation, Division of Evaluation, in the School of Medicine at Stanford University. He is also a Professor of Education at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and co-Director of the Arkansas Evaluation Center. He received his Ph.D. from Stanford University in educational and medical anthropology. He has conducted fieldwork in both Israel (including living on a kibbutz) and the United States (primarily in inner-cities across the country). Dr. Fetterman works in the fields of educational evaluation, ethnography, educational technology, and policy analysis, and focuses on programs for dropouts and gifted and talented students.

See you in October for a stimulating program!

OPEN Needs assessment

By Mike Sikes, OPEN President Elect

In July, OPEN conducted a Web-based survey of its members. The primary purpose was to aid in planning future training; however, the survey also contained questions regarding members' interest in leadership roles with the organization and their ideas about future redesign of the Website. The survey was posted on SurveyMonkey, with the link emailed to all members. The response rate was 87 percent. The following are highlights of the results:

Training Needs: The training needs questions included response options from 1 (Little or no need) to 5 (Extensive need). The skills that were rated highest in terms of need for training (rated either a "4" or "5") were:

- Online and Web-based survey methods (49%)
- Performance measures (43%)
- Ensuring validity and reliability (40%)

In addition, the survey yielded data about the best formats for training and for respondents' specific needs for training in SPSS software.

Leadership Roles: Most respondents (83%) indicated a willingness to serve on the OPEN Council. Only 33 percent indicated a willingness to serve on the Planning Committee. The survey also collected narrative responses related to training that might increase members' willingness to take on leadership roles.

Website Redesign: Questions included response options from 1 (Not valuable) to 5 (Very valuable). The following features of a Website received the highest ratings in terms of value:

- Access to webinars (61%)
- Listserv (51%)
- Membership directory on the public-access section (50%)

The leadership of OPEN will use the results to plan future training and Website development during 2009. Detailed results of the survey are at <http://onewahine.updatelog.com/projects/730108/file/17103448>.

President's Message

Dear OPEN Members & Friends-

As the President of OPEN, I have had an opportunity to reflect on how I got to this position and would like to share some thoughts. I became involved with OPEN in 2001 when I volunteered as a graduate student to help during a conference in trade for registration fees. I quickly realized that OPEN has an amazing network and was an organization that I wanted to develop a stronger affiliation with. After my fall 2000 volunteer experience, I talked to some current Council members about opportunity and then was elected to be the Financial Officer, a position that I held for 3 years. After those 3 years, I took a break from OPEN but felt a need to give back to the organization that introduced me to so many people in my field and helped me develop many of my skills. In 2006 I was lured back to OPEN as President-Elect and now as President. The point of my sharing this story is because I wanted to let everyone know that getting involved with OPEN is easy, and necessary for the organization to be successful. I didn't come into this pathway as an evaluation expert; I grew into the position through my connections with this organization. Therefore, I encourage you to do the same. Please contact a Council member or talk with us during the Fall Conference about ways that you can get involved. We are looking for someone to chair the Planning Committee (or simply be a member of the committee), and a President-Elect. I would be most happy to discuss either of these positions with anyone that is interested.

Hope to see you October 3rd at the Acadian Ballroom in Portland!

Tanya Ostrogorsky, EdD