



Mixed Methodology Madness

By Chari Smith, OPEN Newsletter Editor

A flurry of mixed methodologies filled the rooms of downtown Portland’s Commonwealth Building on April 2nd. The program, “*Applying Mixed Methods in the Real World of Oregon Evaluators*,” offered participants an opportunity to learn from each other’s experience and insight.



Evaluators had the option of participating in one of three work groups: youth/schools, public health, and criminal justice. In each group, members were asked to share a typical research question, positive lessons learned in their work, challenges encountered, and a problem they are currently trying to solve in their work.

In the criminal justice group, several key topic areas emerged from the discussion, including the use of software, construction of baseline data, “shoestring” evaluations done on a tight budget and timeline, and the overall use of research data in criminal justice projects. The group shared their experiences on how data are used. The conversation focused on how to get decision-makers to make use of data instead of just letting it sit on a shelf. “An addiction to data outcomes develops,” said Scott Keir, of the Multnomah County DCJ Research & Evaluation Unit.

In the next room, evaluators interested in public health discussed their views of mixed methodologies. After thirty minutes a lengthy list of everyone’s evaluation problems, challenges, and lessons learned hung on the walls. Matt Carlson, with CARE Oregon, commented, “We have a broad range of issues to address.” The thirteen evaluators delved further into issues such as randomized trials, the feeling that funders don’t support qualitative data, and sequencing data collection.

Up three floors, thirteen evaluators focused on the use of mixed methodologies in education settings. “As a new OPEN member, I was impressed by the diverse background and professions of people in group,” said Kari Nelsestuen, Evaluation Consultant. Participants discussed ways to link qualitative data when they have yielded different results. For example, observations, teacher interviews, and surveys indicate that the school is a “vibrant” learning environment but test scores are low and unchanging.

As the program came to a close, the success of the event was evident in the lingering conversations that continued. The sharing of experiences, ideas, and opinions provided OPEN members with the opportunity to gain additional insight into the topic of mixed methodologies. Eric Einspruch, RMC Corporation, commented, “Today’s event was an exciting opportunity to exchange ideas with members of our local evaluation community. I especially appreciated the diversity of backgrounds and work settings represented by the participants, and their willingness to contribute to the conversation.”



OPEN Website is Ready

OPEN members now have access to a user driven discussion board that will provide technical assistance and networking opportunities, as well as program and event follow-up, job announcements, resume posting, and RFP & Funding Opportunity announcements, and more!

For username and password available to members only, contact
Jeff Knudsen at jeff_knudsen@rmccorp.com

Meet your President Elect

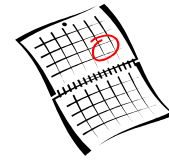
By Tracey Roth, OPEN member

Pamela Clark has been a member of Oregon Program Evaluators Network for two years. Pamela received her law degree from UC Santa Barbara, which she describes as "heaven on earth," perhaps because the avid surfer in her loved having the beach so close. After earning her law degree, Pamela went to Temple University in Philadelphia and earned a degree in Criminal Justice.

The main focus of her past and present projects has been in the realms of adolescents, criminal justice, treatment providers, and community programs. She is the founder of her company Acrobat Research, Inc. One of her career highlights includes a presentation she gave on Co-Occurring Populations at the International Questionnaire Development, Evaluation, and Testing Conference. There were around 100 attendees at this session, including people from the U.S. Census Bureau, Scandinavia and Russia.

As a member of the executive council, Pamela would like to promote an increase in membership especially among smaller research firms and solo practitioners. She is excited to see OPEN continue to provide high level training events and other great opportunities for members.

**Mark your calendars.
The next OPEN event will be**



Date: June 18, 2003

Where: Multnomah County Building,
501 SE Hawthorne

Time: 12:00 – 1:30

Topic: Technical Assistance Exchange to include:

*A discussion on Focus Groups
presented by Michael Ponder, Ph.D., and*

*A follow up discussion on Mixed Methodologies
presented by Michael Bamberger, Ph.D.*

Newsletter submissions are encouraged. Please
contact Chari Smith at:
Smithchari@netzero.net

President's Message

Greetings OPEN Members,

I am truly delighted to see OPEN entering its fifth year of existence and am grateful for the ongoing support and enthusiasm of the membership and the work of previous Councils to bring us this far. In particular, I would like to commend the previous Council's fiscal responsibility, which has kept us in good financial standing.

This year's Council will focus on organizational sustainability. With that in mind, the Council has already begun working on several activities for the coming year: maintaining and enhancing our newsletter, maintaining and enhancing our web site, continuing to offer quarterly programs, continuing to present our annual conference, broadening our membership to include members who are users of evaluation in addition to those who conduct evaluations, reaching out to evaluators in parts of Oregon and Washington beyond the Portland metropolitan area, conducting a member survey, and developing a sustainability plan.

As you know, OPEN succeeds only through the participation of its members. I welcome and encourage each of you to become involved in the activities listed above or in one of our committees, and to begin right now to consider seeking a position on next year's Council. Also, please be sure to visit our newly updated web site (www.oregoneval.org) and take advantage of its benefits.

I am privileged to serve as OPEN's president this year and I would be happy to hear from you. Please feel free to call or e-mail me with any comments, questions, suggestions, or concerns you may have. I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events!

~ Eric Einspruch, OPEN President

Thanks to the following OPEN members who contributed to the completion of this issue:

Kathy Newton, Pamela Clark, and Kari Nelsestuen