

Advice from the Caterpillar

Learn from an Evaluator

Evaluator-led sessions where evaluators share tools, resources, methods, examples, or lessons learned to support SPDG evaluation work. Participants will walk from table to table, asking questions and describing their own work, as appropriate.



October 15, 2026
10:30 – 11:30

<i>Return on Inclusion</i> <i>Examining the social, academic, and economic benefits of including students with disabilities in all aspects of school life, and the evaluation path that has informed continuous improvement.</i> Presenter: Andrea Cahn, SVP Unified Champion Schools, Special Olympics	Assembly Room 110
<i>Lessons Learned from an Old Caterpillar</i> <i>Will provide an overview of lessons learned about evaluating SPDGs.</i> <i>Participants will learn (or confirm) knowledge related to evaluating SPDGs including management approaches to evaluation, formative vs summative methods, reporting (particularly on APRs and final reports), working with state and local partners, and the importance of collaborating within the SPDG community.</i> Presenter: Brent Garrett, Evaluator currently working with ME, VT, and MS	Decatur Place Room 102
<i>Measuring the Metamorphosis: Evaluating Teacher Apprenticeship Programs</i> <i>Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Programs (RTAPs) were a priority in the latest SPDG competition, and that raises a practical question: how do you evaluate them? The answer depends on several factors. In this session, we will consider who is directing the program (a state agency, a university, a district, or a workforce partner) and how that potentially impacts the evaluation as each could have different perspectives and different ideas about what success looks like. We'll also talk about which outcomes to consider evaluating. And of course, we'll save plenty of time for you to swap ideas, talk through challenges, and ask questions of colleagues doing similar work</i> <i>Explore how the lead organization can shape the evaluation; Discuss outcomes to track at each stage of RTAPs; Take away one new actionable evaluation idea related to RTAPs in their state</i> Presenter: Kim Schroeder, Evaluator, Maine SPDG	The Bridge 238
<i>Down the Airtable Hole: Lessons from a Real-World Evaluation Tool</i> <i>Every data tool promises to make you "who you want to be," but can Airtable truly help us in the education field? This session shares our team's firsthand and still new experience adopting Airtable as a data collection and dashboarding tool to support professional development coaches working across MTSS districts and buildings.</i> <i>We'll focus on: Data collection reimaged. How we replaced our previous logging</i>	Library and Parlor 203 & 204

<i>process with a more streamlined, cleaner Airtable form for PD coaches to track their work, improving the experience for both end users and backend evaluators and program team members. Turning data back to users. How live, auto-updating dashboards give PD coaches real-time views into the districts and buildings they support, helping them make informed decisions one what PD to work on next. Data management done differently. The practical advantages of Airtable's ability to store and link datasets in ways that support more connected, flexible evaluation work. The learning curve and the limits. An honest look at where Airtable falls short compared to other tools, and what to weigh before taking the leap yourself. Whether you're "curiousier and curiousier" about Airtable or just want a practical case study in choosing (and living with) a new evaluation tool, come join the conversation.</i> Presenters: Melissa Neelakantan, Research Associate for MO-Edu-SAIL working with Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Ronda Jenson, Professor and Director of MO-Edu SAIL working with Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education	
<i>Beyond the Annual Report: SEA-Evaluator Collaboration for Continuous Improvement</i> <i>This session highlights how New Hampshire's state education agency and its evaluation team have partnered and incrementally strengthened continuous improvement and planned for sustainability in its literacy-focused SPDG, Bridging the Gap in the 603. Presenters will share the tools that have contributed to the initiative's success, including data dashboards, annual staff and family surveys, approaches for using fidelity data, and a sustainability guide that supports the SPDG's work beyond the life of the grant period. Participants will learn how each partner's role shaped the work, how stakeholders have received and continue to use these resources, and how data-based decision-making is kept at the center of planning and sustaining improvements.</i> <i>Participants will learn practical strategies for using evaluation data and shared tools to guide SPDG decisions, communicate with leadership, and plan for sustainability. They'll leave with ideas for structuring their own SEA-evaluator collaboration and adapting resources to their context.</i> Presenters: Nick Coukoulis, PLACE, LLC Amy Aiello	Quaker House Living Room 262

<i>Fidelity of Coaching Implementation with HLPs</i> <i>Illinois will share its experience developing and implementing the Coaching Observation Instrument (COI), a tool designed to assess the fidelity of High-Leverage Practice (HLP) implementation within the coaching cycle. The presentation will highlight the COI's development, piloting, and implementation, as well as findings from the 2025-2026 coaching cycle. Participants will be introduced to the</i>	Terrace Room 207
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<i>COI and examine data collected during the 2025-2026 coaching cycle. The presentation will conclude with a discussion of next steps, including exploring the relationship between fidelity of implementation and student outcomes. Participants will have opportunities to discuss the model, consider potential measures of coaching implementation fidelity, and contribute ideas for strengthening the assessment of fidelity within coaching practices.</i> <i>By the end of this session, participants will: Learn one method for assessing the fidelity of coaching implementation focused on High-Leverage Practices (HLPs). Consider how this approach could be adapted and applied within their own coaching projects or programs. Exchange ideas with colleagues about other approaches and measures they have used to assess the fidelity of coaching implementation. Identify potential next steps for strengthening the measurement of coaching implementation fidelity in their own work.</i> Presenter: Laura Barwegen, Ed.D., Associate Professor Emeritus, Wheaton College, Project Evaluator, Illinois SPDG Stephanie Woodley, M.A., Instructor, Eastern Illinois University, Grant Coordinator, Illinois SPDG	
<i>Program Planning with Evaluation in Mind</i> <i>Has program evaluation ever been an afterthought, considered well after the program planning is underway? This session will share resources for program planning that incorporate simultaneous evaluation planning, as well as procedures for getting input along the way.</i> <i>Participants will 1) reflect on their own planning practices, 2) identify future opportunities to engage in simultaneous program and evaluation planning, and 3) interact with resources designed for simultaneous programming and evaluation planning.</i> Presenters: Anna Harms, Evaluation & Research Administrator, Evaluator, MI Jessica Daily, Professional Learning Administrator, MI	Meeting Room 202