Inclusive Evaluation: Unique Challenges and Impactful Solutions

(link to paper)

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EF+MATH'S MODEL: INCLUSIVE R&D&E

EF+Math has developed a model of inclusive research, development, and evaluation (iR&D&E), based on our Program's 5-years journey of creating math learning approaches. This model re-imagines how R&D&E processes should be enacted in order to create better tools that meet educational needs and support all students' learning. EF+Math's model proposes that R&D&E processes should restructure historical power dynamics across involved parties, cultivate trust and relationships, and prioritize responsivity to local and community contexts and needs.

As curricular tools are refined and formalized, evaluation can gather evidence of their effectiveness and support continued iteration. We suggest that conducting inclusive evaluation studies within our model allows for both more contextualized findings and effective contributions to solving challenges in education.

STUDY CONTEXTS

Features of EF+Math's model were initially developed and tested within 5 evaluation studies conducted through a partnership between the EF+Math Program and the American Institutes for Research (AIR). AIR convened district advisory boards of educators and administrators to provide input on study designs and interpretation of findings. The studies investigated the impact of 3 supplemental math products on students' learning outcomes and experiences.

	Product 1 2024 Study	Product 1 2025 Study	Product 2 2024 Study	Product 2 2025 Study	Product 3 2025 Study
Students	2,401	5,760	940	1,964	2,976
Teachers	28	99	37	81	97
Schools	4	36	7	23	33
Districts	2	12	1	3	8
States	2	9	1	1	7

Each site within the studies provided a unique context for collaboration, including different goals and priorities, team composition, district and school structures and requirements and more.

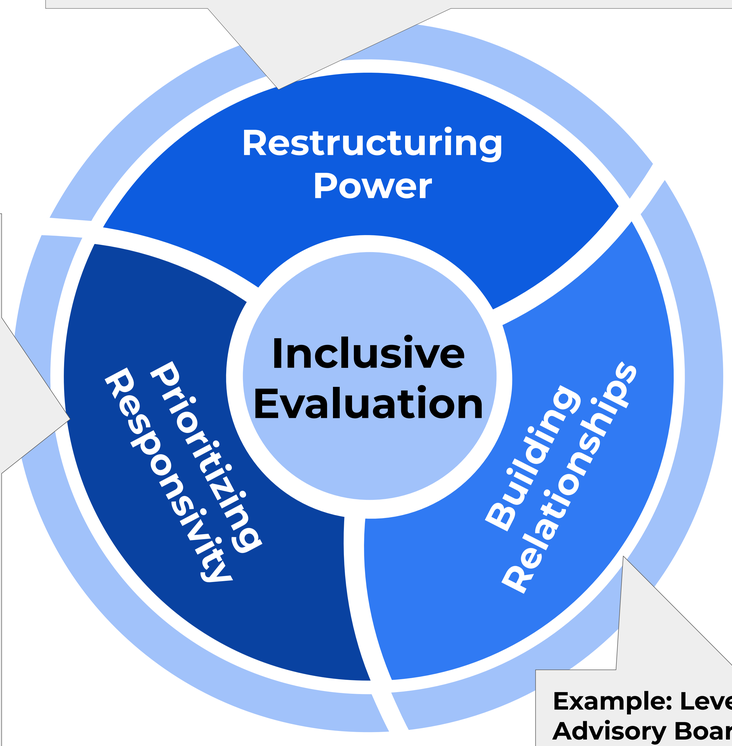
While specific activities varied respective to each context, EF+Math's overall model for inclusive evaluation remained the same. This allowed EF+Math to determine shared constraints in the evaluation process, explore how activities needed to shift in response to local contexts, and determine key cross-cutting strategies pivotal to conducting inclusive evaluation studies.

Inclusive Evaluation (def.): the collaborative process where evaluation teams partner with students, educators, families and other team members to assess research and product development effectiveness, with a foundation of what success looks like for students.

"This experience is one of the first for me in which I felt as a teacher that I was treated as a professional and listened to as a primary source. That doesn't happen a lot in education, so thank you for this experience." (Study Teacher)

Example: Collaboratively Interpreting Findings

- Discuss findings from analyses with educator partners prior to the technical evaluation team making determinations about impact or implications for next steps
- Gather educator perspectives on what might have contributed to outcomes or patterns, using these insights to shape any reported interpretations or conclusions



Example: Aligning with School Interests and Contexts

- Coordinate research questions and data collection to align with district interests and initiatives, including adding district-driven research questions where possible
- Anticipate school and district timing needs when planning for training, implementation duration, and assessment, while aiming to minimize burden

Example: Leveraging District Advisory Boards and Liaisons

- Convene a subset of educator partners to advise on specific activities and develop shared rationale for decisions
- Establish clear roles, pathways, and consistent timelines for communication early on in a partnership, setting a foundation to support any unanticipated discussions in the future

PRIMARY BARRIER: COORDINATING TIME-BOUND ACTIVITIES

Across the 5 studies, our team faced challenges due to the coordination of priorities and ongoing activities among different partners. Coordination was exacerbated by time constraints, which had an impact on the extent to which:

- educator insights could drive research questions and study design decisions, while having enough determined to clearly articulate the request for partnership and gain district and IRB approvals
- implementation could align with district pacing guides and be communicated to educators before scope and sequence plans were finalized for the year, given the needed approvals, recruitment, onboarding, and randomization needed to identify participants
- data could be collaboratively interpreted and recommendations shared with participating teachers, prior to the end of the academic year, given state testing and summative data availability

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

EF+Math found the following activities were essential for mitigating barriers to effectively engage in inclusive evaluation:

1. Ensure the right people are in the right conversations
2. Engage multiple groups of educators and students across different roles in the study (including advisory groups, or co-designers) to provide insights without overburdening implementing teachers
3. Create shared documentation of all project details and decisions to ensure transparency around rationale and support shared understanding of goals
4. Establish processes up front for gathering input and feedback throughout the evaluation timeline
5. Compensate partners for their time and expertise, including teachers, coaches, administrators, data teams, and more

EF+Math funds teams of educators, researchers, and developers to develop innovative math learning approaches which center on affirming the brilliance of Black and Latinx students, and all students experiencing poverty, while improving outcomes in real classrooms. EF+Math is the first program of the Advanced Education Research & Development Fund (AERDF).

References

Learn More About Our Model