

Title: An Approach to Determine the Impact of the BioSciEd Net(BEN) Resources (www.bioscienednet.org/portal) on Faculty Professional Development

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Instrument: Web-based Survey (static version attached)

Description

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) with 11 other professional societies and coalitions for biological sciences established the BioSciEdNet (BEN) Collaborative. The BEN Collaborative supports a portal www.bioscienednet.org for biology resources. The BEN Collaborative provides searchable and seamless access to the digital library collections of its partners, providing accurate and reliable biology education resources. More than 3000 original resources, directed to post-secondary educators, are currently catalogued and available at the portal. Most have been peer-reviewed by the professional, life science societies. Since its inception, the BEN Collaborative has grown from 11 to 24 collaborators and currently has 4000+ registered users.

In summer 2004, the BEN working group conducted a study to evaluate the impact of the BEN resources on faculties' professional development. The overall purpose of the survey was to identify who was coming to the portal and how were they getting there? Did they find what they were looking for and how were they using resources? And did BEN resources have an impact on the user in terms of teaching and learning as well as the users' professional development.

Although the current study received feedback from only a limited number of the overall group of BEN users, the data provided an initial snapshot of the current BEN users. Users included not only postsecondary educators – the primary target audience for the portal – but also a sizeable group of researchers and K-12 teachers. BEN users found the portal primarily through links from other websites, but also via their own web searches, and through referrals from articles and colleagues. They came to the portal primarily to find lecture resources and to enhance their own teaching and learning but they also sought resources for student assignments and non-lecture presentations. The users accessed all the BEN partner sites almost equally, offering a first indicator that the BEN goal of promoting interdisciplinary aspects of life

science teaching is being realized. Most importantly, the BEN users found what they sought...they downloaded and used resources in their teaching or research and they incorporated new ideas and thinking into their teaching. The users expressed how important it was to find resources that were peer-reviewed and backed by professional societies. Finally, the BEN library helped build the professional community, with users sharing information about and/or sending colleagues and students to the BEN site, and expressing interest in participating in BEN as a contributor and/or reviewer.

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Instruments: forthcoming

In the context of two NSDL grants, we have been conducting studies with over 100 teachers for the related purposes of developing and testing 1) software tools, 2) professional development curricula, 3) a quality rubric for online resources, 4) a model of teachers as change agents, and 5) standardized, valid, and reliable instruments. Data sources include electronic surveys, group interviews, key informant interviews, participant observations, case studies, and webmetrics. These multiple and complementary levels of analyses have led to a model that begins to integrate and unify findings.