IES Learning Acceleration Challenges:
Sivan Tuchman Office Hours Transcript

Eden Baker (00:00):
Hey, Gemma. Hi, Nancy. Welcome to Office Hours. Nancy, nice to see you joining us again. So just in case you didn't hear the little notification at the beginning, we are recording this session, like all of the Office Hours sessions, and we'll be sharing the recording via Challenge.gov. The purpose of this session is really for you to ask Sivan any questions that might be on your mind in regards to your Phase 1 submission. You're welcome to turn your video on if you like, you're also absolutely welcome to keep it off, and then you are free to kind of come and go. So we'll be here for the full hour. You are free to come and go, depending on the questions you have. And then Gemma, I don't believe you are at our first session. So nice to meet you. Thanks for joining.

Gemma Lenowitz (00:50):
Likewise. Yeah. Thanks for hosting these. I'm with Overdeck Family Foundation. So we are affiliated with the same challenge.

Eden Baker (00:59):
Great. Well, nice to have actually meet you.

Gemma Lenowitz (01:02):
Thank you.

Eden Baker (01:04):
So I think that's all you need to hear from me. I will back. And then you're welcome to chime in with any questions. And as I said, we'll be here for the full hour and can come go as you please.

Sivan Tuchman (01:25):
Nancy, if you have any specific questions that came up since you talked to Andrew, feel free to shoot them at me and I'll answer them.

Nancy Dyson (01:36):
Right. I guess my biggest concern is making sure that I have the right number of classrooms. And I haven't had a chance since yesterday to try the power up to see how that works, because the way he was showing it was the opposite of how I was seeing it when I was looking at it. The way that I saw it was you put in what you wanted for your effect size, and then it told you the number of classrooms. And he was showing me a way where you fiddle around with your classrooms and number of students and the output was the effect size that you wanted. So is there any way that you can screen share or show me how I would get to that particular ...

Sivan Tuchman (02:44):
Yeah, hold on. Just bringing it up. And I will admit, I have never played with this. Let me screen share and then and we can talk through. Oh, okay. Thank you. I was like, "This is going to your ears off." Okay.

Nancy Dyson (03:25):
All right. So I did the step through process. I clicked on that and then I picked simple cluster random. Is that correct? Is that what you would do?

Sivan Tuchman (03:36):
Yeah.

Nancy Dyson (03:37):
If I was randomizing by classroom ...

Sivan Tuchman (03:41):
I would think so.

Nancy Dyson (03:45):
And then we were doing two levels.

Sivan Tuchman (03:50):
Two levels because you have ... And so this-

Nancy Dyson (03:53):
I was doing that. Yeah.

Sivan Tuchman (03:54):
You did the sample size rather than trying to get the minimum detectable effect size.

Nancy Dyson (03:59):
Right. And I can ... Okay, go ahead.

Sivan Tuchman (04:02):
I mean, I would say, if you know and you're stuck with a sample size. I would go with the sample size one, like you did, and then see what effect size you can find with that. And then if that isn't what you needed to be, then I would go to the other one.

Nancy Dyson (04:25):
Okay.

Sivan Tuchman (04:25):
So if you started here, so-
So up top, I put 0.30 rather than 0.45 because that's what we were recommended to use. And then I guess, I didn't know where this ... See? They had retention rate, but I didn't know where you put in the number of students who thought would be on the level one.

Sivan Tuchman (04:54):
Yeah. So this would be level one in this-

Nancy Dyson (05:01):
Oh, that right there. Oh, there it is.

Sivan Tuchman (05:03):
Yeah.

Nancy Dyson (05:03):
Oh, okay. I see. I see. I see. I see. Okay.

Sivan Tuchman (05:07):
Are you doing math or science?

Nancy Dyson (05:09):
Math.

Sivan Tuchman (05:11):
So this would be the number of students with, or at risk of a math disability that you would expect to have in a classroom.

Nancy Dyson (05:20):
Right. So suppose that was five. Then you would just put five in there. And then the retention rate, you're just going to have to kind of guess on that, I guess, I mean, from my experience, I've never lost a teacher in a study before, but I have lost students just because they move away or whatever.

Sivan Tuchman (05:46):
Yeah. I don't think you'll worry so much about losing students and even, I mean, if you had a teacher come in and could just continue with the intervention and you felt good about the way in which that teacher could continue, you've been able to train them or whatever. Then I wouldn't even consider that a lost class. And then I would just make sure you have in your implementation plan, the description of what you would do under those circumstances. So how would you train a teacher who has to start tomorrow with implementing this? If they were a substitute or a long term sub or covering a maternity leave or something like that?

Nancy Dyson (06:38):
That's a good question. Do you suggest that we just skip the days when there's a substitute there or that we try and continue if it's just a one day thing?

Sivan Tuchman (06:54):
I mean, that's-

Nancy Dyson (06:55):
That's up to us?

Sivan Tuchman (06:57):
Yeah, and what the intended implementation is. If the intended implementation is that anybody could pick it up, then I would say, yeah.

Nancy Dyson (07:08):
Yes.

Sivan Tuchman (07:08):
But if it does require a level of training that you would need any teacher implementing to have, then maybe that's not appropriate in that condition. But again, it's very much determined by your individual site. Oh, wow.

Nancy Dyson (07:26):
Okay. Yeah, sure. I mean, we found since COVID that substitutes don't exist, so they basically take the class and split it up and stick it into other people's classes. So I wouldn't want to under those circumstances have the students, because then we have other teachers getting, looking at what they're doing and whatever. So I think that might be not a good idea.

Sivan Tuchman (07:55):
I think you might actually need three levels because you have school in there.

Nancy Dyson (08:00):
Well, I asked them about that both at the webinar. And when I asked yesterday, they said you can use level two because the random is the teachers, because I'm going to be assigning them equally per school. So each school will have an intervention and a control. And they said that the school would be a fixed effect. And that's how I've done other analyses. But see, so I need, because if you do, I mean, the school is not the unit of assignment that the classroom is, but you think ... So I need to ... Yeah. Give me your input on that.

Sivan Tuchman (08:55):
I know. Well, now, I'm noodling with that because if they do fix on the school, then that inherently becomes a level.

Nancy Dyson (09:15):
I was just thinking if there's equal number of intervention and control, then the school shouldn't really affect it because every school will have intervention and control. Do you know what I'm saying?

Sivan Tuchman (09:27):
Well, I guess that's part of, if you have in this case, two units within the school, so you'd have two classrooms within the school or two grade levels.
Nancy Dyson (09:40):
Right. Yeah.

Sivan Tuchman (09:41):
That would bring you ... So that's with the five students if we made maybe ... See. The students make so little difference, really. When I did it the other way, gave me 60 something, but that would be 60 something classrooms.

Nancy Dyson (10:05):
Yeah, that seems really high.

Sivan Tuchman (10:12):
This would be two classrooms in 33 schools, which also seems pretty high compared to what I feel like Andrew was running before. Eden, do you happen to have handy the one pager on RCTs for math?

Eden Baker (10:34):
I'll grab it.

Natalia Allen (10:34):
I'll pull it up. Oh, okay.

Sivan Tuchman (10:38):
One of you, awesome people.

Eden Baker (10:40):
Natalia, you go for consistency of screen sharing.

Natalia Allen (10:46):
On it.

Sivan Tuchman (10:48):
Oh, there's my button. I can stop that for you too. Nancy, do you feel confident in having enough schools or are you just trying to figure out how many you actually want to have engaged directly with this project or the challenge?

Nancy Dyson (11:39):
From other research search that I've done when we just had intervention and control in the schools by classroom, we only had 16 classrooms, so-

Sivan Tuchman (11:57):
Yeah. That sound more like what I feel like we had in the table. Yeah, if you can just scroll down to.

Natalia Allen (12:11):
Was it this table, or?

Sivan Tuchman (12:24):
Yeah.

Natalia Allen (12:25):
Okay.

Nancy Dyson (12:26):
So is that saying that you need 39 classes, 13 in each school? Or is it saying you only need 13 classes?

Sivan Tuchman (12:36):
No, I think it's 13 classes in three schools.

Nancy Dyson (12:39):
So that's 39 classes?

Sivan Tuchman (12:41):
Right. So that is actually very, pretty much-

Nancy Dyson (12:44):
Yeah. That just seems like so huge to me, I guess I'm not figuring why that is. Maybe because our classrooms, we had classrooms with 15 students in them. Maybe that-

Sivan Tuchman (12:58):
I mean, that can make somewhat of a difference as you saw. I think it went from 39 to 33 when I doubled from five to 10.

Nancy Dyson (13:10):
So down here, it's 21 classes for nine, if you have nine students in each class, but-

Sivan Tuchman (13:15):
Yeah.

Nancy Dyson (13:16):
I mean, we typically work at schools that have a lot of struggling students and so it's not-

Sivan Tuchman (13:29):
That's the other thing is if it was implemented in an intervention class, like a math intervention class, then your whole class is going to be depending on how big that class is, of course. But if it was 15 students in that class, then you're talking about a very different scenario. This is I think these are assuming that you're implementing this intervention and only a very small portion of the class. Our students probably actually even with disabilities using a 10%, 12% estimate. But also, if you're working in hard to serve schools, your proportion of students with disabilities is probably going to be higher. You're probably closer to 15%.
Nancy Dyson (14:15):
Right. So that's my second question. Are we going ... I can't remember what I read where in order to determine eligibility. The schools that we work in, they use either iReady scores or NWEA map scores to decide if kids qualify, but for the state, it's required that if the student is two grade levels below that they have to receive intervention on those particular tasks, their grade level is two below. So that's how they would be assigned to a math intervention if they-

Sivan Tuchman (15:03):
Yeah. I mean, think for the challenge, we're basically setting it as however the school does it, however they would put a student in a tier two or tier three intervention. So I mean, an intervention class would probably be considered a tier two or tier three intervention. Definitely not tier one.

Nancy Dyson (15:25):
Yes.

Sivan Tuchman (15:26):
So if those assessments are the way that they would determine that whoever they would identify as being in that kind of intervention, those would be your eligible students along with any students with IEPs, specifically for math.

Nancy Dyson (15:44):
Right. Okay. Yeah, because our state is very specific. A lot of states don't say how you have to do it, but our state does say.

Sivan Tuchman (15:58):
Yeah. My guess is there's a lot of worry about this, even our discussions around what are the processes that people use, how effective is your MTSS system at a school for actually identifying students and we know that different schools are going to have different capacities around that sort of placement and identification. So we're realistic about the fact that there can be a lot of variation across schools. You just need to specify for us the way that each school does it so that we know that it's ... But again, if it is, they use iReady, if students are this much below iReady, that is totally fine.

Nancy Dyson (16:46):
Okay. So you're not looking for a particular percentile or person for gross?

Sivan Tuchman (16:54):
No.

Nancy Dyson (16:55):
Yeah, okay.

Sivan Tuchman (16:56):
No. I mean, I think there's an understanding in the literature that potentially the bottom 25% of students might be considered at risk, but again, that's going to vary widely by the kinds of schools you're in. I was talking to somebody at a charter school today and talking about, well,
we don't have the normal percent that everyone would have in a normal situation because we have special programs. And so all of those things we know can make that percent vary if it was crazy, 50% of the school, we might question it, but if you're hovering 30% and below, that would be totally normal.

Nancy Dyson (17:47):
Okay. Well, that's great. That's very helpful.

Sivan Tuchman (17:51):
Sure.

Nancy Dyson (17:54):
Yeah. I'm still trying to determine exactly how. Elementary school is different. We've been working mostly in middle school. So I worked in elementary schools. K-1, but I haven't worked in fourth grade yet, so I have to find out exactly how they do it.

Sivan Tuchman (18:19):
Yeah, because sometimes they're departmentalized, but I have found, it varies. I was just at a school where fifth grade was middle school and I was like, "What?"

Nancy Dyson (18:30):
Yeah. Okay.

Sivan Tuchman (18:33):
Schools like to be fun and unique. Yes. Keep us on our toes.

Nancy Dyson (18:39):
Yeah. Right. Okay. Well, that-

Sivan Tuchman (18:42):
We have that office hours so we can answer all the very, very particular questions.

Nancy Dyson (18:47):
Well, that was really the only questions that I had. So I don't know if anyone else is here that has questions.

Gemma Lenowitz (18:56):
I have a very general question just around timeline for recruitment. I know programs have created a lot of new partnerships during the pandemic, but also, as schools I think have fatigued with new partners, particularly new tech tools and research asks related to student data and data privacy concerns. I think our expectations around how long it takes to establish a partnership have lengthened. But I'm curious if others are hearing that and what the recommendations would be in terms of what to plan and map out in terms of how long it takes to formalize a partnership with the district or a school.

Sivan Tuchman (19:44):
Yeah. I am hearing very similar things, Gemma. It does feel like all of those things are true. I know that just getting districts to respond to emails right now is not super easy, especially, individual schools even more difficult. So I do think a lot of new partnerships are going to be particularly difficult for a lot of providers. And so for better or for worse, I think we're anticipating that the most successful providers are going to be the ones that are relying on their pre-existing relationships with individual districts and schools or programs. So we don't have a lot of good advise unfortunately.

Gemma Lenowitz (20:33):
Okay. No worries. Do you think in that case, this takes a separate IRB. If a district might be working with a program or a provider, but they might not have research set up?

Sivan Tuchman (20:49):
Yeah. So we are at least for how it's currently designed. We're not requiring IRBs that I think mostly it's because NWEA already has data sharing agreements with the schools and districts once they agree to be part of or take the assessment. And there's the data sharing agreement as part of the challenge. So a lot of those agreements are built into that. NWEA is doing all the actual research and evaluation portion of the project and the challenge. So there might be some districts that need more than that. And I think those are going to be dealt with on a case by case basis. We're hoping not, because we that time is of the essence for everybody.

Gemma Lenowitz (21:48):
Great. Thank you.

Sivan Tuchman (21:50):
Yeah.

Eden Baker (21:53):
The other thing I would add to that, Gemma, is we are asking old districts who are partnering with intervention providers to fill out a letter of commitment that does contain a little bit more information about this. Part of that is then affirming either that they do not need IRB or equivalent to participate, or if they do, they have already met those requirements. So it is something that we've been trying to be quite proactive in terms of sharing that expectation. And I think to your early point, this is obviously a big trade off.

Eden Baker (22:26):
I think we are aware that this timeline is tight and that it is potentially quite a big ask to go out, inform these partnerships, particularly at the moment. I think the trade off there was wanting to do something really quickly given we know, and I think there was just new data this week, right? About the significant impact of COVID on learning for some of these particular groups. So it kind of felt like we needed to move pretty quickly here. So I think a bit of a trade off, we definitely hear that it's a challenging time, but also wanted to have a goal at doing something pretty quickly.

Sivan Tuchman (23:21):
I'll also just say, Nancy, if you don't have any other questions you don't have to feel compelled to stay on.
Nancy Dyson (23:25):
Okay.

Sivan Tuchman (23:27):
You won't hurt my feelings.

Nancy Dyson (23:29):
Okay. Well, I think I'm going to go.

Sivan Tuchman (23:33):
It was very nice chatting to you and good luck with your submission.

Nancy Dyson (23:37):
Thank you.

Eden Baker (23:38):
Thanks, Nancy.

Nancy Dyson (23:39):
Yeah. See you. Bye.

Natalia Allen (23:41):
Thanks, Nancy.

Gemma Lenowitz (23:41):
Thank you, all.